

**Sustainable tourism development in UK National Parks:  
Principles, Meaning & Practice**

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## ABSTRACT

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Tourism is revered for its ability to encourage development through the utilisation of 'free' natural and cultural resources. However, the benefits of tourism development are often accompanied by negative impacts which degrade the social and environmental context in which tourist interactions occur. This issue is particularly significant in national parks due to the challenges presented by their often opposing dual remit: conservation and recreational access. Sustainable tourism development has been recognised as a means of addressing this issue. However, to date, there has been a lack of research evaluating the understanding and application of sustainable tourism development within national parks. This research addresses this gap.

A qualitative research strategy was adopted which utilised a multi-case study methodology involving the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest. It employed a triangulated strategy which used primary and secondary data collection methods, adding credibility to the findings.

The findings revealed that some stakeholders experienced difficulty in understanding the concept due to complex and ambiguous terminology. Consequently, the underlying principles were considered to be more significant. The meaning and operationalisation of the principles varied according to the contextually unique characteristics of destinations. Overall however, it was acknowledged that the concept should not be seen as an end-goal, but as an on-going process, with the principles *embedded* into planning and management processes if progress is to be achieved.

This study culminates by presenting two models; the first is intended to facilitate an evaluation of the main elements affecting sustainable tourism development, namely, context, understanding and operationalisation. The second is intended for use by practitioners, to aid the identification of key principles and the elements of planning and management where these principles need to be embedded. Both models highlight the importance of contextual awareness and thus, further research is recommended to assess their relevance in other destinations.

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## ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

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AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BNF	Brand New Forest
D&B CIC	Dales & Bowland Community Interest Company
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DITA	Dales Integrated Transport Alliance
FC	Forestry Commission
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NFDC	New Forest District Council
NFNPA	New Forest National Park Authority
NTF	New Forest Trust
NFTA	New Forest Tourism Association
NPA	National Park Authority
NPC	National Park Commission
NYCC	North Yorkshire County Council
UKANPA	UK Association of National Park Authorities
UNEP/WTO	United Nations Environment Programme/World Tourism Organisation
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
USNPS	US National Park Service
VNF	Verderers of the New Forest
WCED	World Commission on Environment & Development
WDPA	World Database for Protected Areas
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTTC	World Travel & Tourism Council
WtY	Welcome to Yorkshire
YDMT	Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust
YDNPA	Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
YDS	Yorkshire Dales Society



## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

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#### **1.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research undertaken and introduce the overall structure of the thesis. The research specifically relates to national parks, sustainable development theories and the role of tourism within each of these. The chapter therefore begins with section 1.2 providing an abridged background of key research within these domains. In addition, it also outlines the rationale for this study by identifying the gaps in existing literature and noting how this research strives to fill these. In brief, there is a substantial amount of research in circulation relating to national parks and sustainable development individually. However, currently there is a lack of research which examines the broad scale understanding and practical application of sustainable tourism development within specific national park contexts. This research therefore attempts to address this. Section 1.3 moves on to summarise the research strategy undertaken, outlining the major elements of the methodology and introducing the two case study sites utilised: the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the New Forest National Park. The specific aims of the research and its supporting objectives are then outlined in section 1.4. The chapter concludes by providing an outline of the structure of the thesis as a whole, giving a brief description of each of the chapters contained herein.

#### **1.2 Research background & rationale**

With estimated receipts in excess of £1 trillion globally, the tourism industry is regarded as one of the most powerful and remarkable socio-economic phenomena (Neto, 2003; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). As an industry, it is present in almost every economy in the world and in both developed and developing nations, it is revered for its ability to utilise 'free' natural and cultural resources to attract visitors and encourage broader development (Cohen, 1988; Munt, 1994; Poon, 1994). Specifically, commonly noted positive impacts of tourism include the creation of employment opportunities,

redistribution of wealth and stimulation of rural and other marginal economies (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Hannigan, 1994). However, given the reliance of tourism on the natural and cultural environment, such benefits are often accompanied by negative impacts, particularly affecting the social and environmental context in which the tourist interactions occur. As a consequence, it has been noted that a “tourism-development dilemma” has arisen (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008) and academic literature is littered with accusations of tourism’s self-destructive nature (Croall, 1995; Cronin, 1990; Mbaiwa, 2005; Plog, 1974; Sharpley, 2009a). Thus, whilst the industry should be encouraged for its economic benefits, social and environmental needs also need consideration. A balance therefore needs to be negotiated between these competing objectives to enable the industry to contribute to wider development aims and ensure its longevity going forward. Recent years have thus suggested that a solution to the ‘tourism-development dilemma’ may be found through the pursuit of sustainable tourism development, a concept which applies the principles of broader sustainable development to the specifics of the tourism industry (Sharpley, 2009a). It is this concept that underpins this research.

Given their interrelatedness and in order to understand sustainable tourism development, it is first necessary to explore the concept of sustainable development. This construct is the culmination of various evolutionary shifts within broader development theory, particularly since the end of World War II. Early development theories were western-centric, imposing top-down structures which were focused on modernisation and stimulating economic growth. Whilst later models started to encompass social and human needs, it was not until the emergence of the sustainable development paradigm that equal concern for the environment was expressed. The forces of industrialisation and modernisation resulted in over-population and exploitation in many areas. However, equally at this time, the world was increasingly acknowledged to be a single global system, with finite natural resources and a fragile environmental capacity. Thus, sustainable development situated economic and social development goals *amongst* environmental sustainability and in doing so, developed a broader focus that extended beyond societal limits.

Since the concept was presented formally in 1980, sustainable development has received significant attention amongst both academics and practitioners (Adams, 2002; Baker, 2006). The notion transcends industrial and sectoral boundaries and has been widely adopted in a number of different fields and by a host of leading international organisations, most notably the UN (Southgate & Sharpley, 2002). However, despite widespread adoption and apparent broad based support, it has been criticised for being little more than a 'buzzword', primarily due to its vague and ambiguous nature (Lélé, 1991). In particular, it is a highly subjective concept that is very much open to interpretation. This is not helped by the on-going difficulties which have arisen in arriving at a suitable, broad scale definition of the concept. Perhaps due to the lack of a suitable alternative, the most quoted definition continues to be that which was presented by the Brundtland Commission almost 30 years ago:

“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

(WCED, 1987: p.43)

Despite heavy criticism for being subjective and vague, this definition does highlight two of the key principles that underpin the concept: futurity and equity. Alongside these, a holistic approach is also advocated and thus, academics have broadly expanded the meaning of the term to incorporate three interdependent, yet mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development: the economy, society and the environment (WSSD, 2004). Whilst there is considerable debate about how it is interpreted and achieved in practice, in theory, the notion highlights the need for an integrated approach which is focused on achieving a 'balance' between these three pillars. However, whilst there is implied equality between the objectives, in reality, they are often competing and thus, require trade-offs which essentially prioritise some objectives over others (Adams, 2006; Barbier, 1987). Determining these trade-offs is complex, often controversial and heavily dependent on the individual stakeholders involved, their relative power and the context in which decisions are being made.

Notwithstanding the criticisms that sustainable development has received, the concept has been widely adopted in numerous disciplines, including tourism. Indeed, given the

significant impact tourism has on host communities and the environment, it is not surprising that the principles of were soon espoused within the industry. The notion of 'sustainable tourism development' was borne in the early 1990s, at a time when the negative impacts of mass tourism were particularly noticeable, especially on fragile natural environments. It swiftly became the latest dominant tourism paradigm, being largely perceived as a panacea for many destinations' issues (Clarke, 1997; Hunter, 1997). However, in the haste to adopt and apply the concept, there was a failure to establish a clear definition or common set of principles for the term itself. In practice, this has led to difficulties in developing a common understanding of the terminology and objectives when operationalising the concept (Butler, 1999; Hardy et al, 2002; Liu, 2003; Sharpley, 2009a.; Wall, 1997a; Welford et al, 1999).

Further criticisms have been levied by academics who suggest that the concept of sustainable tourism development is inherently flawed due to its oxymoronic nature. Tourism is ultimately a consumptive industry and thus, will always have *some* impact on the quality of the natural environment (Hunter, 1997; McKercher, 1993). In addition, critics note the impossibility of predicting future generations' needs, the lack of a unified approach, its vague definition and generic principles (Liu, 2003; McMinn,, 1997; Twining-Ward, 1999; Welford et al, 1993). These latter points however can equally be argued to be one of the concept's key strengths (Garrod & Fyall, 1998). Due to its non-prescriptive nature, it is able to be flexibly interpreted to suit the characteristics of individual destinations and thus, is useable as a framework within tourism planning and management virtually anywhere. This contextual importance is one of the central themes of this thesis and the notion that sustainable tourism development is an entirely situated concept is illustrated through the use of two different case studies.

This research is specifically focused on the understanding and application of sustainable tourism development within UK National Parks. Using the IUCN's definitions of protected areas, these sites are not technically 'national parks' as the majority of the land is privately owned and the areas are not officially enclosed within boundary fences; thus, they are neither 'national' nor 'parks. 'Instead, they form 'protected landscapes' where people and nature interact to create a culturally significant landscape (IUCN, 2008). However, the application of the 'national park' name is entirely

at the discretion of individual nations. There is some criticism therefore that use of the term is sometimes little more than a branding exercise, aimed at developing positive connotations amongst visitors and the wider public (Reinius & Fredman, 2007). Indeed, tourism is a prominent feature in most national park systems and in many instances, has been used as a catalyst for the designation of national park areas to help stimulate the rural economies which exist in and around them. This can be seen going right back to the establishment of the first national park, Yellowstone National Park in 1872, when the US government recognised the need to preserve its 'scenic wonders' for everyone's benefit (Nash, 1970). Yet, despite this, the broad relationship between tourism and national parks has received relatively little attention within academic research (Butler & Boyd, 2000). Instead, there are a plethora of studies which examine national parks and tourism individually and an increasing number which use national parks as a 'backdrop' for studies in other areas. For example, ecotourism has received a significant amount of interest and many such studies occur within national park contexts (Boyd, 2000).

Today, the remit of most national parks contains two distinctive yet, often opposing elements: to protect and conserve the natural environment whilst also providing recreational access. This dual mandate is increasingly challenging due to the rising visitor numbers that national parks are receiving of late. Whilst visitor use is required to stimulate the local economy in and around parks, visitor presence places considerable pressure on the natural ecosystem and the socio-cultural conditions. However, Bushell (2003) suggests that the negative impacts of tourism cannot be attributed to visitor numbers alone, but rather, in most instances are due to inadequate planning and management. This includes specific visitor management and education. Whilst many visitors are aware of the fragility of the natural environment in national parks, often, any concerns they have are outweighed by their 'hedonistic philosophy' to enjoy themselves, whatever the cost (Müller, 1994). As a consequence, planners and managers are under increasing pressure to balance the different elements of the national park system and determine appropriate trade-offs which are both suitable and acceptable to all involved. This includes ensuring that tourists enjoy their experience whilst respecting the social and ecological environments they are visiting.

The process of park planning and management is complicated by the presence of a significant number of stakeholders who have a vested interest in the national park. Within the UK in particular, national park systems are planned and managed by a multitude of stakeholders, often from a variety of sectors and industries, who each have their own goals, priorities and objectives (McCool, 2009). Whilst managing conflicts is challenging, it is essential if both the conservation and recreational purposes of the national park are to be achieved and sustained in the long-term. National parks therefore require effective planning and management using an integrated, holistic and equitable approach which considers the needs of *all* stakeholders. In essence, it has been suggested that sustainable tourism development is an appropriate framework around which to base planning and management within national parks (Boyd, 2000; Eagles & McCool, 2000). However, as stated above, the interpretation and application of sustainable tourism development is heavily influenced by destination characteristics and thus, planning and management processes vary according to different contexts (Stevens, 2002).

Yet, despite acceptance amongst theorists of this general approach (Boyd, 2000; Nelson, 1987), there has been relatively little research which examines the broad scale understanding and application of sustainable tourism development principles within specific destinations. Instead, many existing studies in this domain are commonly centred around individual, singular approaches to planning and management, e.g. methods of stakeholder engagement, interpretation, 'hard' and 'soft' visitor management and monitoring. It should be noted that all of these *are* valid approaches to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism and maximise opportunities and are thus given due consideration within the literature review in Chapter 4. However, this research argues that whilst these are useful, they only become truly effective when an integrated approach is adopted which 'embeds' sustainable tourism development into broader tourism planning and management. One of the key challenges of this however, is that many people disengage with the concept due to their lack of understanding of the complex terminology associated with it. As such, this research postulates that the labelling of the concept is inconsequential and if progress is to be made, the focus should instead be on the principles which underpin it, namely: futurity, equity, integrated approach, multi-sectoral, impact management and a quality tourism

experience. These principles need to underpin the industry. Whilst at a practical level, this may include the use of specific techniques such as those listed above, these cannot operate in isolation. The industry needs to work with stakeholders to establish a common understanding of these principles and outline appropriate objectives to ensure they collectively strive for their practical achievement. In addition, stakeholders need to understand that the notion of sustainable tourism development is not an 'end goal' but an on-going *process* which requires commitment if it is to provide a mechanism for achieving a more balanced, equitable environment for both present and future generations.

### **1.3 Research strategy & relevance**

This research uses two case studies to examine the understanding and application of sustainable tourism development within UK National Parks. By drawing on key theories from the inter-related fields of sustainable development, tourism and national parks, a research strategy has been designed which adopts an interpretive philosophical stance. The study utilises qualitative methods, thus enabling the examination of human behaviours, emotions and their associated meanings within their natural contexts (Hollinshead, 1996; Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). The case studies have been built up using secondary data sources such as websites, interpretation materials and other forms of print, as well as primary data collection methods, including observations, interviews and photographic evidence. By using and analysing the data in unison, this resulted in a triangulated research strategy which adds credibility and rigour to the methodology (Veal, 2011; Yin, 2009).

However, the research strategy is not without its limitations. Due to constraints on time and resources and the desire for *breadth* amongst the findings, the *depth* of data collection was somewhat compromised. For example, instead of seeking a large number of interview respondents within each stakeholder category, a broader range of respondents from different stakeholder groups were sought. In addition, the number of respondents differed between the two locations and thus, the direct comparability of the sites is limited. However, these limitations are believed to be somewhat inconsequential. The overall aim of the research was to develop an understanding of

these two specific cases, taking into consideration their unique characteristics and contexts. In doing so, some similarities and differences could be observed; however, wider generalisability of specific issues and approaches was not considered to be a key objective.

The two case studies included in this research were the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the New Forest National Park. These were selected on the basis of a number of pre-determined criteria, including the presence of a suitably established tourism industry, the stakeholders' recognition of the concept of sustainable tourism and sufficiently different contextual characteristics *inter alia*. Indeed, the Yorkshire Dales is one of the oldest national parks in the UK with one of the lowest population densities. The New Forest on the other hand, is one of the newest designated areas yet has one of the highest population densities. Both areas have a long history of tourism and possess well established industries, with developed planning and management systems. In addition, prior to commencement of the research, key contacts within both areas were identified who were willing to participate in the study to ensure that sufficient data could be accessed.

Whilst the study does not focus on generalisability, the culmination of this research is the production of two models, presented in Chapter 8, both of which highlight the relationship between the core elements of this thesis: context, meaning and practice. The first model is intended to provide a theoretical framework for understanding and evaluating sustainable tourism development whilst the second is a practical tool to assist in progressing destinations along the road towards sustainable tourism development. Given the broader operational difficulties which surround the concept, this model may assist other, similar destinations in identifying the principles of the concept and where these should be embedded into planning and management processes. Both models acknowledge the importance of context and thus, are not overly prescriptive in terms of how this should be done. In addition, they avoid using complicated terminology to ensure they are accessible to a range of stakeholders. This allows the models to be used flexibly in multiple destinations. Indeed, as will be highlighted at numerous points going forward, the manner in which sustainable tourism

development is understood and practically achieved will vary according to the specific contextual characteristics of each individual destination.

#### **1.4 Research Aim & Objectives**

The overall aim of the research is:

*“To explore the meaning and practical application of sustainable tourism development principles within the context of UK national parks”.*

To aid the achievement of this broader aim, the following, more specific objectives have also been identified:

- To determine how the concept of sustainable tourism development is perceived and understood by key tourism stakeholders.
- To examine the role of different stakeholders and their respective levels of inclusion in the planning and management of tourism development.
- To identify how stakeholders view the structure and governance of national parks and its suitability as a context for developing sustainable tourism development.
- To examine the environmental, economic and social impacts of tourism within the national parks from various stakeholders’ perspectives.
- To identify the extent to which national parks currently ‘embed’ sustainable tourism development principles into their planning and management practices.
- To explore the significance of context in determining planning and management strategies, by assessing the similarities and differences between two UK national park models: the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest.

#### **1.5 Thesis Structure**

Following this introductory chapter, this thesis is divided into a further eight chapters which are organised as follows:

## **Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 introduces and explores the key concept that underpins this research: sustainable tourism development. The concept is heavily rooted in its parental paradigm of sustainable development. However, it also has origins in broader development theory. The chapter therefore begins by discussing the major dominant development paradigms. It provides brief commentary on their evolution from top down, economic based models to holistic, bottom-up approaches that also encompass social, cultural and environmental dimensions (Sharpley, 2009a). The chapter then moves on to focus on sustainable development, with discussions providing an evaluation of the relative usefulness and widespread adoption of the concept. Of particular focus in this research is the application of sustainable development principles into the tourism industry: a concept broadly termed sustainable tourism development. This industry specific notion suffers many of the same criticisms as those levied at sustainable development and these are presented towards the end of the chapter, with specific focus given to issues of definition, key principles and operationalisation.

## **Chapter 3**

This chapter focuses on the contextual element of the research and is therefore dedicated to national parks and the discourses that have developed both generally and specifically in the UK. It begins by reviewing the role of national parks amongst other protected areas, with specific consideration given to the IUCN's Protected Area Management Categories. The chapter then moves on to discuss the historical context of national parks, considering the main stages in their evolution around the world since the first national park, Yellowstone, was designated in 1872. Given the importance of context in this study, this section also gives specific consideration to the evolution of national park legislation within UK. Overall however, the chapter postulates that there is no 'typical' national park, with the label being given to a variety of different protected areas of all manner of sizes, locations, purposes and managerial structures (Hall & Frost, 2009a). One commonality noted amongst most areas is their dual mandate to provide environmental conservation and recreational access. Indeed, tourism has a complex relationship with national parks and in most instances, was fundamental in areas achieving designated status. However, as visitor numbers continue to grow, planners and managers face increasing conflicts amongst disparate stakeholder groups,

primarily due to the damaging impacts associated with the industry. Bushell (2003) suggests that these negative impacts are not directly attributable to visitor numbers *per se*, but instead are the result of inadequate planning and management. The chapter concludes by inferring that the solution to this issue is through the adoption of sustainable development principles within tourism planning and management.

#### **Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 concludes the literature review, by drawing together the theoretical constructs of the two preceding chapters and considering the practical application of sustainable tourism development in national parks. Inskeep (1991) suggests that, whilst a sustainable development approach can be applied to tourism at any scale, its effectiveness is dependent on how well the planning is formulated in relation to the specific characteristics of the destination. In order to establish appropriate planning methods, it is first important to evaluate the environment to identify the impacts which need mitigating and those which should be optimised wherever possible. The chapter therefore commences with discussions on the main tourism impacts prevalent in national parks, before moving on to analyse the role of planning and management in national park systems. In these discussions, specific emphasis is given to the need for integrated park management, whereby the planning and management processes effectively feed into each other through a continuous cycle. Whilst various specific strategies are discussed which present ways in which this can be done, the central argument presented here and reflected in the research as a whole, is that the principles of sustainable tourism development need to be *embedded* into all planning and management activities.

#### **Chapter 5**

In chapter 5, the theoretical framework moves away from existing literature to consider the basis for the strategy employed in this research. Broadly, the study adopts a qualitative methodology that employs an interpretive philosophical stance to enable the examination of human behaviours, emotions and meanings within their situated contexts (Hollinshead, 1996; Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). It utilises a multiple case study methodology that employs both primary and secondary data collection methods, namely key informant interviews, documentary sources and observations. Two

national parks were selected for inclusion in the study: the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest National Park. This chapter provides both a brief description of these as well as justification for their selection. Throughout, consideration is also given to the limitations of the research, with specific evaluation of the issues of validity and reliability and a commitment to ensuring sufficiency of data.

### **Chapters 6 and 7**

These chapters present the findings from the two case study sites, with Chapter 6 focussing on the Yorkshire Dales and Chapter 7 on the New Forest. Primary data collected is interwoven with secondary methods to build a comprehensive case study of each site. A significant proportion of these chapters are descriptive in order to set the appropriate context for further discussions. In particular, a profile of each national park provides details of the community structure, cultural heritage and main tenets of the tourism industry. The chapters then move on to analyse tourism planning and management within the parks, with specific reference to governance structures, key stakeholders, primary planning documents and the main tourism impacts which affect each of these. The final section within each chapter turns its attention to the perceptions of key stakeholders, drawing heavily on the data gleaned from interviews. Their broad understanding of sustainable tourism development is presented, along with discussions surrounding the general usefulness and appropriateness of the concept. In presenting the findings from the second case study, Chapter 7 also starts to draw comparisons between the New Forest and the Yorkshire Dales contexts.

### **Chapter 8**

Chapter 8 forms the main discussion and analysis chapter of the research. It draws on the results and analysis presented in the preceding two chapters and compares this to the existing literature already in circulation in this domain. Whilst some reference is made to context throughout the research, the main approach in this chapter is to consider the Yorkshire Dales and New Forest in unison. The chapter begins by analysing the meaning of sustainable tourism development, the findings of which suggest that the 'labelling of the concept' is of little consequence. Indeed, understanding appears to stem from the principles of the concept and as a consequence, the rest of this chapter is structured around these principles, with analysis presented on a theme by theme

basis under six key headings: futurity, equity, integrated approach, multi-sectoral, impact management and a quality tourism experience. The findings largely indicate that both destinations have well established tourism industries built on the foundations of sustainable tourism development. However, the manner in which the destinations understand and embed these foundations and the relative importance attached to the specific elements of sustainable tourism development vary according to their unique contextual characteristics.

As such, an implicit relationship can be observed between the three core components of this study: context, understanding and practical application. This relationship is manifested in two models which offer the main contributions to existing research. The first proposes a theoretical framework which draws on the findings of this study and outlines the key aspects of each of these three components. Given the vast array of literature in this field, this model is intended to facilitate the theoretical study of these components and assist in understanding the central tenets of each of the aspects. The second model meanwhile is intended for practitioner use and whilst again it highlights the relationship between context, meaning and practice, it also distinguishes the key principles of sustainable tourism development and the areas of planning and management within which these principles need to be embedded. Although both models draw on the findings of this study, they purposefully avoid being overly prescriptive to enable them to be used flexibly by multiple stakeholders in a variety of national park contexts.

## **Chapter 9**

This forms the concluding chapter of the thesis. It outlines the key findings drawn from the study and specifically highlights the potential usefulness of the proposed models of sustainable tourism development in other, similar national park locations. It is important however, to appraise the research findings in light of the broader limitations of the study and therefore, a brief summary is provided of the main issues identified. Largely, these are methodological and resulted due to the design of the research strategy. Many of the limitations could therefore be mitigated though extended research and the chapter thus culminates by describing potential avenues for further study.

## Chapter 2

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

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#### 2.1 Introduction

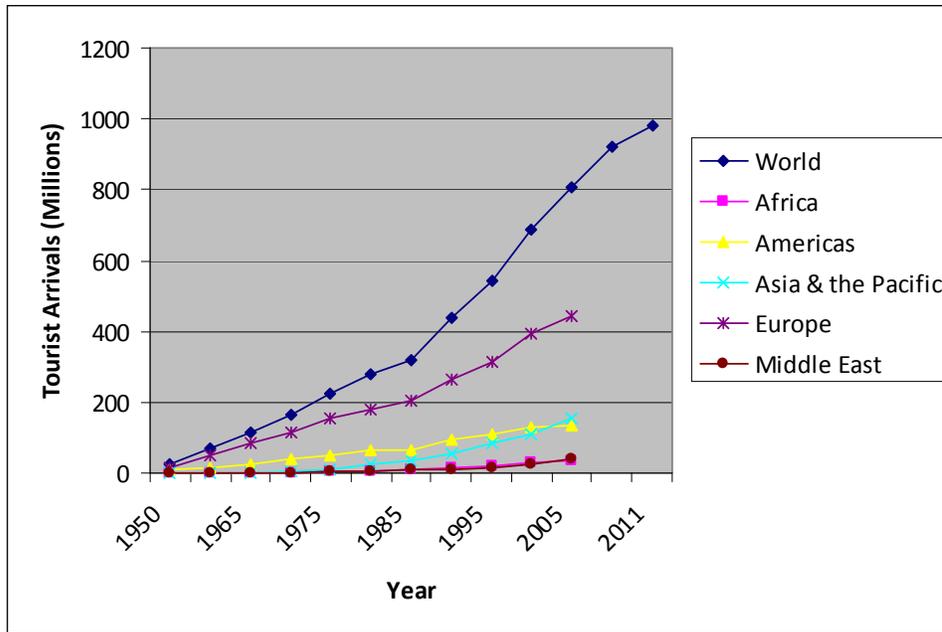
The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and examine the key concept that underpins this research: sustainable tourism development. The chapter begins with an examination of the key reasons tourism is pursued as a development option. For some time, tourism was revered for its potential economic benefits. However, as tourism volume grew, the industry became increasingly criticised for its negative environmental and social impacts. A “tourism-development dilemma” therefore arose (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Since the 1990s, it has been proposed that the solution to this dilemma lies in sustainable tourism development (Sharpley, 2009a); a concept which applies the principles of sustainable development to the specificities of the tourism industry. Sustainable tourism development is complex and in order to establish a comprehensive understanding and thus build a solid theoretical foundation for this research, it is first necessary to examine its roots in development theory and, specifically, its parental paradigm, sustainable development. Section 2.3 therefore turns its attention to development theory and charts the evolution of development paradigms from their economic growth roots in modernisation theory, through to the holistic approach adopted in alternative development.

Section 2.4 then specifically addresses the sustainable development paradigm. It begins by establishing how the concept arose as a result of the convergence of traditional development theory and environmental sustainability (Adams, 2001; Lélé, 1991). It then examines the definitional issues present in existing literature and the key objectives and principles that underpin the concept. Having reviewed the evolution of development theory, Section 2.5 will then move on to examine the similarities that occurred within the evolution of tourism theory, with specific reference to Jafari’s Tourism Platforms. The changes in tourism theory and the widespread embracement of broader sustainable development ultimately resulted in the advent of sustainable tourism development. Finally, in Section 2.6, the chapter will turn its attention to

sustainable tourism development by examining the interpretational difficulties, key objectives and principles and operational issues that are presented within existing studies.

## **2.2 Tourism as an agent for development**

Over the last 60 years, tourism has evolved into the one of the world's most powerful and remarkable socio-economic phenomena (Neto, 2003; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). An increasing number of people now have the ability, means and freedom to travel. To many people, tourism is no longer considered a privilege but a part of a every day life and thus, the industry has matured from being an elite activity enjoyed primarily by the upper classes to an activity enjoyed by masses every year (Twining-Ward, 1999; Urry, 2002). As illustrated in Figure 2.1, the growth in international tourist arrivals has grown exponentially since 1950 and, if the domestic tourist numbers were also to be included, these figures could be up to ten times higher. Unsurprisingly, just as the number of people engaging in tourism has increased, so too has the value of the tourism industry. In 1950, the direct value of tourism attributed from international tourism receipts was approximately US\$2.1 billion whilst in 2011, this was reported to exceed US\$1 trillion (UNWTO, 2012a). If indirect and secondary expenditure were also included, the industry value would be over US\$6 trillion, accounting for 9% of global GDP and over 255 million jobs worldwide (WTTC, 2012).



**Figure 2.1: International Tourist Arrivals (1950-2011\*)** (Source: UNWTO, 2006; 2012b)

(\*Regional figures only available up to 2005)

The continued and extensive growth of tourism over the last 60 years has led to the industry being perceived as a 'safe' development option. Its ability to contribute to national and local economies through direct income, foreign exchange earnings and government revenues has seen the industry revered for its potential to generate wealth and create employment opportunities (Burns, 2008). Furthermore, tourism can stimulate other areas of the economy through backward and forward linkages as the industry is reliant on other sectors for the provision of direct tourist services (i.e. transport) and indirect services (i.e. construction) (Hall & Lew, 2009; Liu & Wall, 2006). However, tourism is not only considered to be a catalyst for economic growth, but also a stimulant for broader social development and regeneration. It is not surprising then that tourism is now a key feature in a vast number of development policies (Binns & Nel, 2002; Brohman, 1996; Jenkins, 1991) with the majority, if not all, countries actively marketing themselves as tourist destinations.

A high proportion of research in this area examines tourism's ability to contribute to development within developing nations. Indeed, in some developing countries, tourism can be perceived to be the only development option available, due to the deterioration

of traditional commodity markets which once provided income (Burns, 2008; Reid, 2003). Unlike other sectors, tourism experiences relatively few trade restrictions and thus, is viewed by some as a “passport to development” (Dann, 2001). It enables economies to engage in an international marketplace (Britton, 1982) and benefit from the advancements associated with globalisation (Reid, 2003; Sharpley, 2009a; Zhao & Li, 2006). Perhaps most notable are the improvements in technology (particularly the internet and air travel) which have widened consumer choice by improving information and access to a plethora of destinations (Beirne & Curry, 1999; Hall & Lew, 2009; Milne & Ateljevic, 2001). At a more localised level, tourism also provides a valuable source of employment, particularly in rural, often marginalised areas where there are few alternatives (Liu & Wall, 2006). It therefore has the potential, if managed effectively, to contribute to the standard of living for local communities (Binns & Nel, 2002; Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004).

Although the potential of tourism as a development option in developed countries has received much less attention in literature, tourism is a prominent feature of many, if not all, developed countries’ economies. Developing countries often benefit from their abundance of ‘free’ natural and cultural resources, which provides the opportunity to develop a tourist industry with relatively minimal start up costs. The growing demand for authentic tourism experiences away from crowded, over-commercialised, polluted resorts (Cohen, 1988; Munt, 1994; Poon, 1994) provide them with the chance to market themselves as ‘unspoilt’ destinations. However, this opportunity has also been exploited by developed countries such as the USA and the UK, particularly through the promotion of distinctive areas of natural beauty such as protected areas and national parks.

Developed nations however, often have a plethora of industries which contribute to income and broader development and thus, often do not place tourism in as high a regard as developing nations. However, it is still recognised for its potential to produce significant economic benefits (Reid, 2003). Tourism can be used to redistribute wealth and employment opportunities and reduce the disparities between regions (Hannigan, 1994). It can help stimulate rural economies which are experiencing declining agricultural sectors and can be a valuable regeneration tool in post-industrial urban

areas (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Hannigan, 1994). Thus, whilst the nature of tourism development may be different in developed countries, the motivations behind its pursuit are often essentially the same (Reid, 2003).

However, whilst tourism can stimulate economic growth, it is by no means a 'smokeless' industry (McKercher, 1993) and can also negatively impact host communities and the natural environment both in developing and developed countries (Neto, 2003). The industry has been accused of widening disparities within and between nations, as the control of tourism industries remains dominated by the developed western countries (Britton, 1982; Burns, 2008; Tapper, 2001). The continuing presence and power of multinational co-operations such as transnational airlines and international hotel groups mean that tourism income is often lost through overseas leakage (Brohman, 1996) and local level employment opportunities tend to be restricted to menial, low paid seasonal work (Page & Connell, 2006). Destinations in developed and developing countries are also vulnerable to political and economic instabilities including global recessions, rising oil prices and terrorism (Burns, 2008). This is particularly problematic for areas that rely heavily on tourism as their primary source of income as the decline of tourist numbers can significantly impact the local communities. However, high tourist numbers can also be detrimental to an area, with key problems at a local level including environmental degradation, overcrowding, congestion, resource depletion, ecosystem damage, disruption to local communities, the commoditisation of culture and the interests of tourists being prioritised over local needs (Brown, 1998; Burns, 2008; Cohen, 1988; Ding & Pigram, 1995; Hall & Lew, 2009; Neto, 2003).

Tourism is reliant on the natural and cultural environment in which it exists. Despite the perceived economic benefits, the detrimental social and environmental impacts essentially mean that tourism can be a self-destructive industry, with visitors degrading or destroying the very environment which they have come to experience (Cronin, 1990; Mbaiwa, 2005; Plog, 1974; Sharpley, 2009a; Welford et al, 1999). It is evident therefore that a "tourism-development dilemma" exists (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Although on the one hand it is encouraged to stimulate economic growth, on the other it is criticised for its social and environmental destruction. If tourism is to continue being used as a

tool for development, there is a need to acknowledge the importance of each of these dimensions and strive for a balance between competing objectives. In recent years, it has been suggested that the solution to this dilemma is “sustainable tourism development”, a concept which applies the principles of the wider sustainable development paradigm to the specificities of the tourism industry (Sharpley, 2009a). It is this concept that underpins this thesis.

Sustainable tourism development is a concept heavily rooted in development theory and specifically, its parental paradigm, sustainable development (Farrell, 1999; Hardy et al, 2002; Hunter, 1995; Tosun, 2001; Twining-Ward, 1999). In order to ascertain a comprehensive understanding of the concept and establish how it has arisen, it is first necessary to examine the evolution of development theory and specifically, its relationship with tourism. Many previous studies have neglected to examine these theoretical links (although notable exceptions include Mowforth & Munt (2003), Sharpley (2000; 2009a), Southgate & Sharpley (2002), Telfer (2002; 2009), Wall (1997a)) and, in doing so, merely accept the transposition of sustainable development principles into tourism contexts. However, given the prominence of sustainable tourism development in this thesis, it is essential that such assumptions are challenged and a solid theoretical foundation for the research is constructed. Thus, prior to a specific examination of sustainable tourism development (in Section 2.6), Section 2.3 will briefly examine the evolution of development theory before Section 2.4 moves on to specifically analyse the concept of sustainable development.

### **2.3 Development Theory**

Although the term ‘development’ is well used, it is a complex and ambiguous concept that is notoriously hard to define (Goulet, 1992; Hettne, 1995; Sharpley, 2009a; Szirmai, 2005). It is used to describe both the end goal which countries strive to achieve and the process of transformation that societies pass through in order to achieve this goal (Ingham, 1993; Telfer, 2002; Thirlwall, 2006). However, ultimately, it “does not refer to a single process or set of events, nor does it imply a single static condition” (Sharpley, 2000: p.3). Welch (1984) suggests the concept is in fact “bereft of meaning”, whilst Hettne (1995) argues that there can only ever be suggestions of what is meant by

development within a specific context. Indeed, over the last 70 years, development has been widely debated and many different definitions have been proposed. The discipline of development studies first emerged following World War II, when the major powers were focused on rebuilding their economies and stimulating growth (Telfer, 2009). It is not surprising then that the concept was initially strongly related to the notions of economic growth and westernisation. However, it soon became apparent that whilst economic growth is often considered a prerequisite for development (Thirlwall, 2008), the achievement of it will *not* automatically result in development (Burns, 2008). Consequently, Seers (1969) suggested that using economic growth as “a single aggregative yardstick” was no longer an appropriate measure of development and emphasised the need for the term to be examined more holistically. Development therefore became a more human-centred concept that addressed issues of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Later, this was broadened further to include the objective of self-reliance through the achievement of cultural independence, increased national ownership and control and a reduced reliance on multi-national corporations (Seers, 1977). Sharpley summarises this evolution process:

“in the space of some thirty years the concept of development has evolved from a process or condition defined according to strict economic criteria to a continual, global process of human development guided by the principles of self-reliance; whilst economic growth remains a cornerstone, it also embraces social, political and cultural components.” (Sharpley, 2000: p.4)

The ambiguity and changing nature of development studies is not restricted to definition. It is also reflected in the various theories, strategies and ideologies encapsulated within development paradigms. Since the 1950s a number of paradigms have been identified, although specifically, four dominant paradigms have received significant attention in development literature: modernisation, dependency, economic neo-liberalism and alternative development (Telfer, 2002). These paradigms represent distinctive approaches to development at particular times. However, it is important to note that emerging paradigms did not necessarily replace preceding paradigms and in fact, elements of each are still relevant today. Largely though, they reflect development theory’s shift from:

“traditional, top-down economic growth-based models through to more broad based approaches focusing on bottom-up, people-centred planning within environmental limits.” (Sharpley, 2009a: p.38)

From a developmental perspective, this research is primarily concerned with the concept of sustainable development and in order to understand the factors that influenced its emergence, it is necessary to briefly review the dominant development paradigms that preceded it.

The following sections provide a brief analysis of four key paradigms: modernisation theory, dependency theory, economic-neoliberalism and alternative development. Each paradigm is incredibly complex and, in reality contains a number of subfields that can be interpreted in a variety of ways (Telfer, 2009). Further, enhanced explanations of these be found within works by the following key authors: Hettne (1995), Martinussen (1997), Potter (2008), So (1990) and Szirmai (2005) *inter alia*. However, for the purposes of this research, the proceeding sections focus on the well quoted, fundamental elements of each paradigm so as to provide a general background to broader development theory.

### **2.3.1 Modernisation theory**

One of the earliest development paradigms, modernisation theory, is purported to have prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s (Telfer, 2002). The theory is heavily focused on the pursuance of economic growth in order to achieve increased ‘modernisation’ (de Kadt, 1992; Reid, 2003; Sharpley, 2000; Willis, 2005). It suggests that development follows a specific progression route, from a traditional society to a more modern one (Sharpley, 2009a) as illustrated in Rostow’s (1960) uni-linear *Stages of Economic Growth* model (as illustrated in Figure 2.2). The take off stage involves the introduction of an industry or sector that often requires foreign investment. This ‘growth pole’ then leads to ‘growth impulses’ which spread throughout the region stimulating further development (Sharpley, 2009a). Rostow suggested that as countries experienced economic growth (and thus moved from one stage of the model to the next) they

passed from underdevelopment to development (Storey, 2003). Developed countries were therefore already thought to have passed through the development stage and attained a level of self-sufficiency whilst underdeveloped countries were only considered to be in the early stages of the model (Telfer, 2002).

The model was based on American-European experiences and thus suggested that development should mimic the experiences of western countries and gradually become more industrialised (Hettne, 1995; Rist, 1997; Szirmai, 2005). Indeed, increased westernisation was also reflected in wider societal changes during this period, including the movement of people from rural to urban areas and the shift away from traditional industries (i.e. agriculture), towards more modern, manufacturing and service industries (Storey, 2003). It is not surprising therefore that modernisation theory became associated with the concepts of westernisation, industrialisation and colonisation (Binns, 2008; Burns, 2008; Hettne, 1995; Rist, 1997; Szirmai, 2005; Willis, 2005). However, this influence of western economic development is one of the key criticisms of modernisation theory (Telfer, 2002). In assuming that this is the 'correct model', traditional means of development are disparaged. Furthermore, whilst this model may have been applicable to western countries, other countries may not pass through the same stages in the same order due to their different backgrounds and political institutions. In reality, some countries move from a state of development back to a state of underdevelopment, as examples in Sub-Saharan Africa have illustrated. The model's unidirectional nature however fails to acknowledge that this is even a possibility (Binns, 2008).

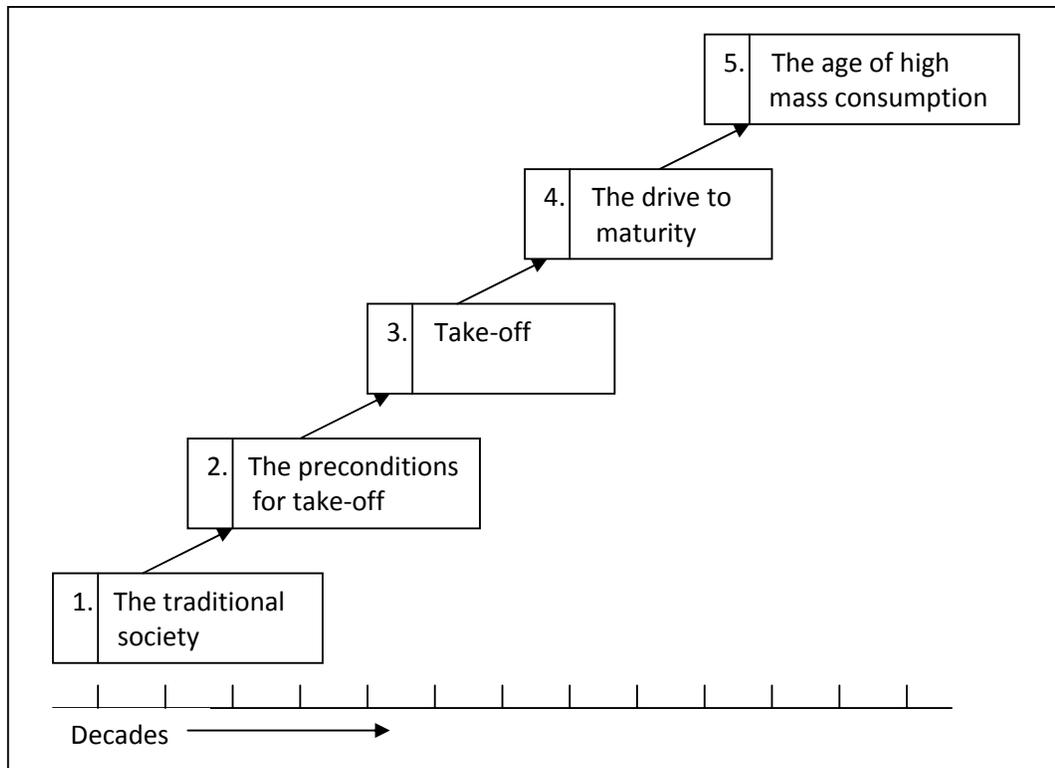


Figure 2.2: Rostow's Stages of Economic Growth Model (Source: Binns, 2008: p.84)

### 2.3.2 Dependency theory

Dependency theory arose in response to the discontent with modernisation theory in the 1960s. Also referred to as *world systems theory* or *underdevelopment theory*, it argues that the weak position of developing countries is attributable to their position within the wider global system rather than their lack of capital or inadequate domestic conditions (Booth, 1985; Hettne, 1995; Telfer, 2009). It classifies developed nations as the 'core' whilst developing nations are termed the 'periphery'. The core countries possess dominant economic and political situations and are therefore able to accumulate wealth by exploiting the weaker peripheries e.g. through the expropriation by foreign enterprises (Sharpley, 2000; Telfer, 2002). This limits the periphery's development opportunities resulting in their increased dependence on the core. This results in an unequal relationship between the two as periphery countries become conditioned by and dependent upon the of the expansion and development of core economies (Routledge, 2002). Thus, the theory suggests that developing countries are in a state of underdevelopment due to the unequal global system and significant

disparities between rich and poor economies (Szirmai, 2005; Todaro & Smith, 2009). Some theorists suggested that this could only be remedied by the peripheries' withdrawal from the global capitalist system and the adoption of more socialist principles that encourage state-drive industrialisation (Hettne, 2008). Dependency critics however suggest that the theory idealises pre-capitalist relationships between societies and argue that protectionist measures are not an adequate means of addressing complex development issues (So, 1990; Szarmai, 2005). Furthermore, the theory's emphasis of external, global conditions over internal, local factors overgeneralises and simplifies the issues surrounding development and underdevelopment (Booth, 1985; Milne & Ateljevic, 2001; Szarmai, 2005).

### **2.3.3 Economic neo-liberalism**

The 1970s saw the emergence of economic neo-liberalism as a response to the widespread state interventionism prevalent in the preceding paradigms. Development theory began to shift from its economic growth roots towards the promotion of economies that were:

“free from the restrictions placed upon it by states, such as national economic regulations, social programs, and class compromises (i.e. bargaining agreements between employers and trade unions) as they are barriers to the free flow of trade [and] capital”  
(Telfer, 2009: p.155)

The Thatcher-Reagan era of the 1980s further entrenched economic neo-liberalism by championing the power of market forces and encouraging development based on the principles of privatisation, free trade and deregulation (Sharpley, 2009a; Telfer, 2009). In contrast to the dependency paradigm, economic neo-liberalism encouraged international trade and globalisation and suggested that the world should be seen as a single global model. However, the paradigm was another western driven model and thus developing countries had neoliberal principles thrust upon them by policies and measures adopted by international organisations such as the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO (Routledge, 2002; Simon, 2008). A key example of such a development policy was the use of Structural Adjustment Lending Programs (SALPs) which were

administered and coordinated by the World Bank. These provided development loans which were conditional on economic liberalisation efforts within the recipient countries (Moseley & Toye, 1988). The neoliberalist paradigm is associated with the increased power and freedom afforded to international organisations within the global economy whilst the position of sovereign states has eroded (Telfer, 2002). SALPs are a prime example. Rather than providing aid, they have been heavily criticised for actually impeding development as the terms of the loans required governments to restructure, resulting in decreased expenditure on healthcare, education and environmental programs (Telfer, 2009). Thus, the neoliberalist paradigm has been criticised for being too economically focused and failing to consider the importance of wider social, political and environmental factors (Brohman, 1995).

#### **2.3.4 Alternative development**

All three preceding paradigms centred around linear economic growth models achieved through top-down structures and policies (Sharpley, 2000; Telfer, 2002). By the 1970s, there was a growing dissatisfaction with such models due to their minimal or inadequate regard for socio-cultural developmental issues. Thus, the alternative development paradigm was proposed: a perspective that focused on wider human and environmental issues through a bottom-up approach to development (Sharpley, 2009a). One of the first human-development approaches was based on Seers' work (1969; 1977), an economist who argued that the problems associated with poverty, unemployment and inequality required the satisfaction of basic human needs, namely food, health and education (Binns, 2008). Later, this approach was broadened to encapsulate the objectives of self-reliance and indigenous development theories. This highlighted the importance of endogenous development approaches that incorporated local cultures and encouraged community participation (Telfer, 2009). Such participation enabled the empowerment of weaker, marginalised communities and allowed them to have a role in local decision making and control over their own development (Desai, 2008; Telfer, 2003).

It was argued however, that the formulation and implementation of human development strategies needed to be environmentally sustainable (Barbier, 1987).

Ecological resources were acknowledged as being finite and thus became increasingly significant in both political and economic systems (Telfer, 2002). In the 1980s, alternative development therefore adopted another dimension: environmental concern. This attempted to incorporate consideration of the natural environment with a people orientated, needs-based approach. Yet, whilst theoretically this appeared to remedy the issues associated with preceding paradigms, it still received various criticisms. For example, it was noted that the pursuance of human needs as a priority may impede economic growth whilst indigenous development strategies were hampered by problems with “consensus building, barriers to participation, lack of accountability, weak institutions and lack of integration with international funding sources” (Telfer, 2002: p.49).

Due to the inclusion of environmental issues, amongst discussions of alternative development, there are often references to sustainability. Indeed, given their similarities, it is somewhat unsurprising that the alternative development paradigm became synonymous with sustainable development. However, whilst both concepts focus on human development, well-being and the environment, sustainable development differs fundamentally from alternative development in terms of its spatial and temporal patterns. Whilst alternative development is societal specific, sustainable development has a much broader focus that incorporates three key principles: a holistic approach, futurity and equity (Sharpley, 2000; 2009a). Given these differences and its importance to this research, the concept of sustainable development requires further in-depth analysis and will therefore be subject to scrutiny in Section 2.4.

## **2.4 Sustainable development**

Sustainable development is one of the fundamental theories underpinning this research. Whilst this study specifically looks at the application of the concept within a tourism context, in order to properly understand the term and its key principles, it is first necessary to review the term from a broader stance. This will help to establish a foundation of knowledge surrounding the concept and highlight key areas which will influence the research undertaken. Thus, the purpose of this sub-section is to examine the meaning, objectives and principles of sustainable development. The contextual

specificities of the concept will then be analysed in discussions on sustainable tourism development later in the chapter.

Sharpley suggests that:

“the defining feature of sustainable development that sets it apart from preceding development paradigms is the explicit location of ‘development’ within an environmental framework. Sustainable development does not just embrace environmental factors; its very foundation is environmental sustainability” (Sharpley, 2009a: p.46)

However, whilst the concept was the first to *articulate* the links between development and the environmental, in practice, development has always impacted the environment, contributing to issues such as over-population, exploitation of natural resources and pollution (ibid). Various conservation movements were established in the late nineteenth century in response to the impacts of industrialisation and modernisation. Fundamental amongst these was the designation of the world’s first national park, Yellowstone National Park in the US in 1872, which aimed to protect the landscape and preserve its natural beauty (Runte, 1987).

It was not until the 1960s however, that environmental concern moved beyond the conservation and protection of natural areas and species towards a broader environmentalist ideology. Environmentalism became associated with the consequences of scientific, technological and economic processes as well as resource depletion (Dresner, 2008). Concurrently, the world was becoming increasingly seen as a single global system with finite resources. The environmental problems associated with increased industrialisation (e.g. water and air pollution) did not adhere to national boundaries and what happened in one area of the world ultimately impacted societies in other areas. It was these realisations that led to the emergence of ‘environmental sustainability’, a concept that acknowledged the need for the maintenance of natural capital indefinitely (Goodland, 1995; Goodland & Daly, 1996).

Sustainable development arose as a result of increasing concern for the global environment and was perceived to be an idea that reflected “a convergence of scientific knowledge, economics, socio-political activity and environmental realities that would guide human development into the twenty-first century” (Wood, 1993: p.7). It is essentially a forward looking concept, that combines development theory (as discussed in Section 2.3) and environmental sustainability (Adams, 2001; Lélé, 1991; Sharpley, 2009a). Its aim is to promote a form of development that is “contained within the ecological carrying capacity of the planet, which is socially just and economically inclusive” (Baker, 2006: p.5). However, critics have suggested that it is essentially an oxymoron; given that development is concerned with *resource consumption* and environmental sustainability with *resource protection*, the two dimensions are inherently incompatible (Friend, 1992; Redclift, 1987; Robinson, 2004; Wall, 1997a). This has not stopped sustainable development gaining widespread support from people on both sides of the development-environment debate though (Rees, 1989).

#### **2.4.1 Defining and understanding sustainable development**

As a term, sustainable development was first presented by the IUCN’s *World Conservation Strategy* in 1980 although it did not receive widespread recognition until the WCED’s publication of *Our Common Future* (more commonly known as the Brundtland Report) in 1987 (Rees, 1989; Steer & Wade-Grey, 1993). Since then, it has become something of a ‘buzzword’, with national governments, regional and local authorities, civil society groups and economic actors all making commitments to the sustainable development goal (Dresner, 2008; Lélé, 1991). It appears in an ever increasing number of government reports and policies and has been the subject of a significant amount of academic research across a range of disciplines (Adams, 2002; Baker, 2006). It has also been widely adopted and championed by international organisations and agencies promoting ‘environmentally friendly’ development (Redclift, 1987). Most notable amongst these is the UN, who have published numerous documents on realising sustainable development, the most significant of which is arguably Agenda 21 which provides “a blueprint for securing a sustainable course of development in the 21st century” (Southgate & Sharpley, 2002: p.240).

However, despite the widespread use and apparent 'broad-based support' for sustainable development, the concept has also been the subject of an array of criticism, primarily due to its vague and ambiguous nature (Lélé, 1991). One of the key areas of contention remains definition. Despite vast numbers of publications by academics, policy makers and development practitioners, there is still no definitive definition of sustainable development that meets everyone's approval. Given that the concept is multidisciplinary, it is inevitably applied in a multitude of contexts and thus, means different things to different people (Giddings et al, 2002; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Steer & Wade-Grey (1993) suggest there as many as 70 proposed definitions of sustainable development exist and given that their paper was published nearly 20 years ago, it is likely that there are even more today. Despite this, perhaps due to a lack of suitable alternative (Redclift, 1992), the most well quoted definition continues to be the Brundtland Commission's:

"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

(WCED, 1987: p.43)

Although it is neat and simple, this definition has received considerable criticism primarily due to its haziness which leaves it open to interpretation (Adams, 2006; Mitlin, 1992). The definition focuses on 'needs' but fails to clarify what these needs are or even elaborate on exactly which elements of development are being referred to (Rees, 1989; Southgate & Sharpley, 2002). Furthermore, the subjectivity of 'needs' means that different areas will identify priorities according to their cultural, social, economic and ecological circumstances (Barbier, 1987; Beckerman, 1994). The definition's focus on intergenerational equity has also been criticised as ultimately, it is impossible to accurately predict and thus allow for the needs of future generations due to the constantly evolving nature of societies at local, regional, national and international levels (Redclift, 2008). Furthermore, Tosun & Jenkins (1998) raise the question of how realistic (and ethical) it is to expect developing countries to consider future generations when they themselves are living in poverty.

However, Giddings et al (2002: p.188) suggest that “in many ways, Brundtland was a political fudge” that was purposely ambiguous so as to gain widespread acceptance. Despite criticism, the definition remains well used as its vagueness enables a range of divergent disciplines to interpret and apply the concept as they wish (Kates et al, 2005; Pearce et al, 1989; Robinson, 2004). Indeed, Skolimowski (1995) suggests that the ambiguous nature of sustainable development is what makes it palatable to everybody and thus, should be seen as one of the concept’s main strengths. Furthermore, it is thought that sustainable development has “the potential to unlock the doors separating disciplines” (Adams, 2002: p.355) and enable “a range of disparate groups to assemble under the sustainable development tent” (Kates et al, 2005: p. 11) to work towards a common goal.

Given the variety of disciplines and situational contexts in which sustainable development is used and applied, it is suggested that multiple interpretations are not only to be expected but are in fact necessary (Adams, 2001; 2002; Hunter, 1997; Redclift, 1992). The importance attached to the various dimensions of sustainable development will depend on the background, audience and context in which the concept is being used. It is not surprising then that definitions vary amongst different cultures around the world (Redclift, 2008). Particularly noteworthy are the significantly different interpretations of sustainable development in developing and developed countries (Tosun & Jenkins, 1998). It is a western-centric concept and thus, is inevitably more suited to development strategies in western countries. Indeed, developed countries are better placed to consider their environmental impact because they have already undergone development and attained a level of self-sufficiency. However, committing to sustainable development, e.g. by changing resource usage to more environmentally friendly methods, is not so easy for developing countries and nor is it considered particularly fair (Osofsky, 2003; Wood, 1993). Throughout periods of intense industrialisation, western countries had no restriction on their environmental impact and were able to use their natural resources however they saw fit. In theory then, should developing countries not be afforded the same opportunities for growth and development? Indeed, the priority for many developing countries is their short-term survival and they rely on the use of natural resources in order to achieve economic development and overcome extreme poverty (Redclift, 1992). Consideration

of environmental impacts and the needs of future generations are therefore often a secondary consideration in poorer nations, making sustainable development somewhat difficult to operationalise (Adams, 2001; Tosun & Jenkins, 1998).

However, despite sustainable development being largely embraced as a development paradigm, some critics suggest that its vagueness has resulted in the concept being rendered meaningless (Giddings et al, 2002). It has been used by some to justify their actions and thus has been both "excessively stretched" and poorly applied (Beckerman, 1994; Redclift, 2008; Skolimowski, 1995). One particular problematic issue is the interchangeable use of the terms *sustainable development* and *sustainability*. Although related, there are significant differences between them. As discussed at the beginning of Section 2.4, sustainability was originally a concept embedded in ecology where it was used to refer to the ongoing maintenance of the natural environment. However, sustainability is not tied to ecology and can be used in a variety of other contexts (e.g. social sustainability, economic sustainability) and thus, an appropriate definition is "the capacity for continuance into the long-term future" (Porritt, 2007: p.33 in Sharpley, 2009a: p.47). Sustainable development meanwhile is a broader concept that steers societal change towards greater economic, environmental and social sustainability (Baker, 2006). Thus, sustainability can be viewed as the end goal, whilst sustainable development is the process of achieving that goal (Sharpley, 2009a). Whilst the two concepts are therefore inevitably interlinked, they are by no means the same and to use them interchangeably can be very misleading.

This brief discussion on definition has highlighted the ongoing criticism of sustainable development due to its vague and ambiguous nature. However, perhaps what this debate best shows is that the concept is simply too complex to summarise in a single definition. The lack of a universal definition is therefore not necessarily problematic. As a concept, it is "holistic, attractive, elastic but imprecise" (Adams, 2006: p.3). However, advocates of sustainable development suggest that it provides a "general guideline for future activity" and that the vagueness enables them to "'fine tune' the concept to meet the needs of specific places and cultures" (Wood, 1993: p.8). Given the contextual and multidisciplinary nature of the concept, there is no one 'correct' approach to sustainable development. To impose a rigid definition would therefore be

restrictive and could lead to the exclusion of some members of society whose views did not align with the definition (Robinson, 2004). As a result, many academics and destination planners find it more useful to move away from defining sustainable development and instead, focus on the identification of the key objectives and principles which underpin the concept. The following section therefore progresses to discuss this stance.

#### **2.4.2 Key objectives and principles**

Sustainable development objectives are largely divided into three elements:

1. *Environmental Sustainability*: is primarily concerned with the conservation, ownership and management of natural resources to counteract major threats to biodiversity including resource degradation, reduced soil and water quality and increased pollution (Redclift, 1992).
2. *Economic Sustainability*: refers to the achievement of wealth and economic growth as well as the attainment of access to secure and sustainable livelihoods for poorer communities (Barbier, 1987).
3. *Social Sustainability*: incorporates poverty alleviation, protection of national culture, enhanced political and civil rights and increased individual choices and freedoms (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008).

Dalal-Clayton & Bass state:

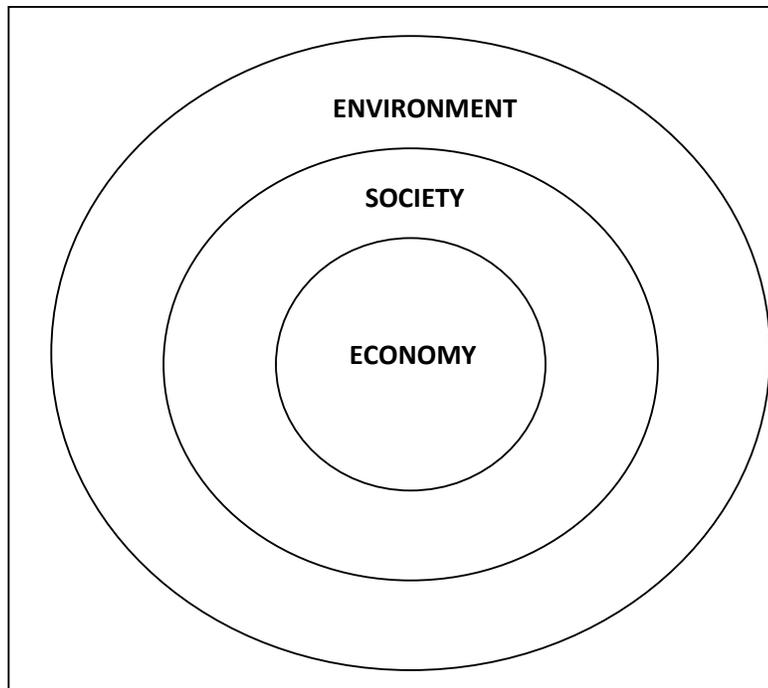
“at the heart of the [*sustainable development*] process is the belief that social, economic and environmental objectives should be complementary and interdependent in the development process.”

(Dalal-Clayton & Bass, 2002: p. 12)

This notion was further reinforced by the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) who described the elements as three “mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development” (WSSD, 2004). This approach implies the need for an appropriate balance between (potentially) competing objectives when developing policies and practices. However, it also suggests that effective trade-offs between the

objectives are possible but this is not always the case. When trade-offs occur, essentially, decisions have to be made about which objectives are of greater importance and, inevitably, it is the economy that is prioritised above societal and environmental needs (Adams, 2006; Barbier, 1987). Although man-made capital is desirable, it is not an effective substitute for natural capital, for example, damage to the o-zone layer is irreparable no matter how much the world's economy grows (Pearce et al, 1989; Redclift, 2008).

The three 'pillars' are not equivalent independent components, primarily due to their complex relationship with each other (Adams, 2006). Giddings et al (2002) suggest that this interdependent relationship is better represented by using a 'nested' model of sustainable development (as illustrated in Figure 2.3). The existence and development of the economy (represented by the inner circle) is reliant on both society and the environment. In turn, society (the middle circle) is dependent on the environment however could (and in the past has) exist without a developed economy. Finally, the environment (the outer circle) can exist free from society and the economy although fundamentally, it underpins both and thus its finite nature has the potential to limit human activity and growth (Adams, 2006). In summary therefore, the economy is nested within society which in turn is nested in the environment (Giddings et al, 2002). It is therefore important that policies and practices are developed which promote an integrated model of sustainable development that attempts to 'balance' the three core objectives rather than enforcing trade-offs (Dalal-Clayton & Bass, 2002; Giddings et al, 2002).



**Figure 2.3: Nested model of Sustainable development** (Source: Giddings et al, 2002)

This notion of 'balance' however is very theoretical. In practice, sustainable development is an ongoing process rather than an achievable end goal and achieving equilibrium between the different elements often remains elusive. Its dynamism means that "desirable characteristics change over time, across space and location and within different social, political, cultural and historical contexts" (Baker, 2006: p.8). It therefore requires policy changes that integrate different sectors and overcome the barriers between disciplines (Dalal-Clayton & Bass, 2002; Giddings et al, 2002; Robinson, 2004). Thus, sustainable development is underpinned by a number of guiding principles, including:

1. *A holistic approach*

Although various national, regional and local authorities employ development policies that reflect the challenges of individual areas, the economy, environment and society are ultimately global concerns (Owen et al, 1993). The impacts of human activities and responsibilities therefore need to be recognised at a global scale as well as locally (Haughton, 1999). Thus, sustainable development should

adopt a holistic approach and frame development policies within a global social, economic and environmental context (Sharpley, 2000).

## 2. *Futurity*

The development of the global economy and society must be sensitive to the needs of future generations, particularly in relation to the use and exploitation of the environment (WCED, 1987). Sustainable development should be viewed as a 'bequest to the future' and thus future generations should be given "at least as much capital wealth as the current generation inherited" and "must not inherit less environmental capital than the current generation inherited" (Pearce et al, 1989: p.3).

## 3. *Equity & Compromise*

Sustainable development is concerned with both inter-generational and intra-generational equity and thus promotes "fair and equitable opportunities for development of all people, both in the present and in the future" (Sharpley, 2000: p.10). Also significant, is the importance of inter-species equity, as the preservation of ecosystems and maintenance of biodiversity are essential elements of sustainable development (Haughton, 1999). Sustainable development therefore requires frameworks to be put in place that will control and regulate development so that it is adequate for the needs of current and future generations. In doing so, it must acknowledge the importance of all three of its dimensions and achieve an appropriate balance between economic growth and conservation, with compromises made where necessary (Owen et al, 1993).

## 4. *Participation*

Sustainable development requires the support and involvement of a range of stakeholders (WCED, 1987). Participation is central to public engagement as it enables the articulation of different needs and ensures these are incorporated into policies and practices (Baker, 2006; Robinson, 2004). Sustainable development should therefore provide the opportunity for everybody, particularly communities and marginalised groups, to engage with decision-making and contribute to the effectiveness of sustainable policies and processes (Haughton, 1999).

Despite being guided by theoretical objectives and principles, sustainable development still incurs a number of operational and measurement issues (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Such issues vary according to the discipline in which the concept is being applied and given that this research is focused on sustainable development in tourism, further discussion on specific operationalisation issues will be undertaken in Section 2.6.3. However, at this stage, it is important to highlight the key reason behind operationalisation issues: namely, the concept's inherent ambiguities. Although people may be working towards the same goal, their interpretations of sustainable development and how to achieve it may be very different and thus, a coherent, unified approach is often not employed. If people within the same industry are prioritising different dimensions and pulling in opposite directions, how can progress be made? Although, if trade-offs are to be employed, who is to say which dimensions should be prioritised over others? After all, development and sustainability are both subjective. Given the paradoxical nature of sustainable development, is it even possible to achieve economic growth and social sustainability without degrading the environment and depleting natural resources? Although these issues remain a fundamental concern for sustainable development, it has not stopped the concept being widely adopted in numerous disciplines, including tourism (Southgate & Sharpley, 2002), as will be discussed at greater length in Section 2.6 of this chapter.

## **2.5 Tourism and Development Theory**

Since World War II, tourism development has, to a great extent, mirrored the evolution of development theory. Following a review of literature, Jafari (1990; 2001) outlined a model identifying four tourism 'platforms' which broadly illustrate the evolution of tourism research: 'advocacy', 'cautionary', 'adaptancy' and 'knowledge-based' (Pearce, 2003). It should be noted however that whilst each of Jafari's platforms builds on its predecessor, they do not necessarily replace previous platforms nor assume a greater significance (Weaver, 2006). Indeed, despite the proposed timescales for each platform provided in the descriptions below, all four are in fact present in the current global tourism sector (Jafari, 2001). Each platform does however represent a distinctive approach to tourism development and together, the four platforms provide a key framework for the categorisation of tourism scholarship (Pearce, 2003). Furthermore,

within each platform, it is possible to identify elements of the four development paradigms discussed in Sections 2.3.1 to 2.3.4 above and thus establish the relationship between tourism and development theories. It therefore provides a good background for understanding the historical context of sustainable tourism development (Hardy et al, 2002).

*(1) Advocacy Platform*

This first platform to arise post World War II was characterised by strong support for tourism, particularly as an alternative to extractive industries such as mining and logging (Jafari, 1990; Weaver, 2006). Although some non-economic benefits were articulated (including the preservation of culture, revival of traditions and preservation of natural and man-made environments), the primary argument for the promotion of tourism was the perceived economic benefits, particularly foreign exchange earnings, employment opportunities, multiplier effects and the industry's potential to stimulate broader development (Hardy et al, 2002; Jafari, 1990; Weaver, 2006). Little regard was given to the detrimental impacts of tourism, particularly on the host communities, and thus mass tourism quickly emerged and extended around the world. The advocacy platform therefore strongly reflects some of the key arguments within broader modernisation theory (as discussed in Section 2.3.1), with tourism seen as a 'growth pole' due to its potential to contribute to broader development (Eadington & Smith, 1992; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008).

*(2) Cautionary Platform*

In the 1960s and 1970s, the cautionary platform challenged the pro-tourism views that had been articulated within the advocacy platform. At this time, there was dissatisfaction with the dominant economic growth models of development and an increased environmental awareness and thus the impacts of mass tourism came under scrutiny (Hardy et al, 2002). Unless tourism was adequately planned and regulated, it was suggested that it would result in negative social, environmental and economic impacts for the host community including seasonal and unskilled jobs, economic leakages, destruction of nature, the commoditisation of people and

culture and the disruption to host communities (Jafari, 1990; Weaver, 2006). In particular, there was concern for developing regions, with theorists suggesting that developed 'core' regions dominated and exploited the underdeveloped 'periphery' regions (Weaver, 2006). As a result, a high degree of state intervention was encouraged to introduce some regulation to tourism development (Hardy et al, 2002). The cautionary platform therefore clearly reflected aspects of the dependency development paradigm (as discussed in Section 2.3.2) and specifically the core-periphery dependency theories.

### *(3) Adaptancy Platform*

The 1980s saw tourism research move away from the polarised views on tourism impacts articulated in the advocacy and cautionary platforms. The adaptancy platform instead was concerned about specific types of tourism which would be more beneficial for host communities and the environment and could be encouraged in place of mass tourism enterprises (Hardy et al, 2002; Jafari, 1990). These strategies were characterised as being small-scale, locally-owned enterprises that represented a literal alternative to mass tourism development (Weaver, 2006). Various forms of tourism were suggested including indigenous tourism, responsible tourism, green tourism, ecotourism, sustainable tourism, small-scale tourism, and people-to-people tourism (Jafari, 1990; Weaver, 2006) although largely, these are referred to collectively under the umbrella term "alternative tourism". This platform was consistent with the aims of the broader alternative development paradigm discussed in Section 2.3.4 (Dann, 2001), however, as Jafari notes:

"The Adaptancy Platform has emerged as a **partial remedy**. Its strategies have not been fully developed to accommodate the mass volume of tourism generated globally. Tourism's forms and practices can be influenced, but its volume cannot be curtailed." (Jafari, 1990: p.35– *emphasis added*)

### *(4) Knowledge-based Platform*

The most recent phase in tourism theory emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s. This knowledge-based platform recognised that tourism is just one part of a global

economic system and thus should be considered alongside other industries and sectors. Research focuses on the multi-disciplinary nature of tourism and suggests the need for a greater understanding of tourism as a system including its structures and functions, rather than simply focusing on impacts and tourism forms (Eadington & Smith, 1992; Hardy et al, 2002; Jafari, 1990). The somewhat idealistic 'alternative tourism' proposed in the adaptancy platform was therefore not considered appropriate for many destinations due to the scale of the mass tourism enterprises already in situ (Weaver, 2006). Instead, a more holistic approach was required that would enable tourism researchers and industry professionals to develop and use rigorous scientific research to determine which forms of tourism would be most appropriate for a given destination and how this should be planned and managed going forward (Jafari, 1990; Weaver, 2006). The emphasis was on the minimisation of negative impacts, maximisation of benefits and establishment of environmentally sustainable tourism and the concept of sustainable tourism development gained increasing prominence. Sustainable tourism development refers to the specific alignment of sustainable development objectives and principles within the tourism context (Sharpley, 2009a). An explicit link is therefore made between the knowledge-based platform and the broader developmental paradigm of sustainable development, which was discussed in greater detail in Section 2.4.

In summary, Jafari's model highlights the significant change in tourism thinking, from its pursuance as an economic growth tool in the advocacy platform, through to a more inclusive model that embraces socio-cultural, environmental and economic dimensions in the knowledge-based platform and resulted in the emergence of the concept of sustainable tourism development. It is this latter concept which is fundamental in this research and thus, is given specific attention in Section 2.6 below.

## **2.6 Sustainable Tourism Development**

Sustainable tourism development arose as a result of two key factors: 1. the dissatisfaction with mass tourism and its associated negative consequences and; 2. the widespread adoption of the broader sustainable development paradigm. It literally

inserts the word “tourism” into the middle of “sustainable development” (Cronin, 1990) and, in doing so, has created the latest dominant tourism paradigm specifically focused on the application of sustainable development principles within the tourism industry (Clarke, 1997; Hunter, 1997; Liu, 2003). Unsurprisingly, the criticisms levelled at sustainable development have also been applied to sustainable tourism development, namely: its oxymoronic nature, the impossibility of predicting the needs of future generations, the lack of a unified approach, its vague definition and a lack of movement from theory to practice (Liu, 2003; Wall, 1997b; Welford et al, 1999). Whilst the concept has received significant attention in tourism academia, largely this remains patchy, disjointed, littered with uncertainties and plagued by terminology ambiguities (Liu, 2003; Sharpley, 2009a). Yet despite these criticisms and its relatively infant status, sustainable tourism development has been adopted as a guiding principle in tourism planning and now holds a prominent position in virtually all policy documents (Bramwell & Lane, 1993a; Garrod & Fyall, 1998; Sharpley, 2009a). However, in the haste to apply the principles of sustainable development to tourism, there was a failure to establish a unified definition or common set of principles and thus, various interpretations now abound, making it a truly complex concept (Butler, 1999; Hardy et al, 2002; Liu, 2003; Sharpley, 2009a; Wall, 1997a; Welford et al, 1999).

### **2.6.1 Definitions and Interpretations of Sustainable Tourism Development**

Despite being the subject of vast amount of research and policy documents, there remains significant debate over the meaning of the sustainable tourism development. Unlike sustainable development that broadly accepts and uses the Brundtland Commission’s definition, there is no one definition of sustainable tourism development that is both widely accepted and cited. Industry professionals and scholars have therefore tended to adapt the concept to suit their own purposes, resulting in an array of interpretations (Sharpley, 2009a; Weaver, 2006). A sample of some definitions quoted within tourism literature can be seen in Table 2.1.

<p>“Sustainable tourism is a positive approach intended to reduce the tensions and frictions created by the complex interactions between the tourism industry, visitors, the environment and the communities which are host to holidaymakers. It is an approach which involves working for the longer viability and quality of both natural and human resources.” (Bramwell &amp; Lane, 1993a: p.2)</p>
<p>“Sustainable tourism development...suggests that proposed tourism developments should have economic advantages, create social benefits for the local community and not harm the natural environment. In addition, these goals should apply not only to the present generation but to future generations as well.” (McMinn, 1997:p.135)</p>
<p>“Sustainable tourism...means accepting a commitment to providing healthy long-term tourism thoroughly integrated with the other elements of economy and with environment and society in such a manner that a policy change in one does not duly interfere with the optimal functioning of any of the others.” (Farrell, 1999: p.191)</p>
<p>“Sustainable tourism has come to represent and encompass a set of principles, policy prescriptions and management methods that chart a path for tourism development such that a destination’s environmental resource base (including natural, built, social and cultural features) is protected for future development”. (Welford et al, 1999: p.166)</p>
<p>“<i>Tourism, as it relates to sustainable development</i>, is tourism which is developed so that the nature, scale, location and manner of development is appropriate and sustainable over time, and where the environment’s ability to support other activities and processes is not impaired, since tourism cannot be isolated from other resource use activities as a tourism-centric approach to sustainability.” (Wight, 2002: p.223)</p>
<p>“Sustainable tourism development is accepted as all kinds of tourism developments that make a notable contribution to or, at least, do not contradict the maintenance of the principles of development in an indefinite time without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs and desires.” (Tosun, 1998: p.596)</p>
<p>“Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destination, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.” (UNWTO, 2010)</p>
<p>“Sustainable tourism development can be thought of as meeting the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future” (Inskeep, 1991: p.461)</p>
<p>“Sustainable tourism [is] all forms of tourism development, management and activity which maintain the environmental, social and economic integrity and well-being of natural, built and cultural resources in perpetuity.” (Europarc, 2001: p.5)</p>

**Table 2.1: A sample of sustainable tourism development definitions**

These sample definitions are all relatively similar in that they clearly illustrate the ease of transposition of sustainable development principles into the specificities of tourism, namely:

- *A holistic approach* - Wight, Bramwell & Lane and Farrell all highlight the need for a holistic approach to tourism development whereby the industry is considered alongside other existing industries and sectors.
- *Futurity* – All the definitions highlight the importance of developing a tourism sector that has long-term viability and will provide opportunities for future generations.
- *Equity & Compromise* – The importance of inter-generational and intra-generational equity is highlighted in most of the definitions. Whilst the UNWTO, McMinn and Europarc all make specific reference to the three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, environmental and social sustainability - that need to be balanced in order to ensure tourism's long term sustainability.
- *Participation* – None of the definitions specifically note the need for participation although reference is made to the “opportunities” and “benefits” that sustainable tourism development affords by McMinn and Inskip.

Another key observation from this sample of definitions is the discrepancy in the terminology. Whilst essentially all of the definitions display distinct commonalities and thus could be interpreted to mean the same thing, the first four refer to the concept as “sustainable tourism” whilst the latter four refer to it as “sustainable tourism development”. The interchangeable use of these terms is common within tourism literature but, given that the two concepts differ significantly in terms of their sectoral approach to development, this is very misleading (Butler, 1999; Wall, 1997b). As one of the first academics to distinguish between the two concepts, Butler defined them respectively as:

“sustainable tourism is tourism which is in a form which can maintain its viability in an area for an indefinite period of time” (Butler, 1993: p.29)

and:

“tourism which is developed and maintained in an area (community, environment) in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period of and does not degrade or alter the environment (human or physical) in which it exists to such a degree that it prohibits the successful development and wellbeing of other activities and processes”

(Butler, 1993: p.29)

The definition provided for sustainable tourism adopts a single-sectoral approach, placing specific emphasis on the long-term survival and maintenance of tourism. It fails to position tourism within the broader societal system, thus neglecting to identify other potential industries and sectors that may be competing for the valuable and often limited resources (Butler, 1999). Tourism is therefore encouraged regardless of whether or not it is the most appropriate use of resources for the host community (Wall, 1997b). The latter definition however, adopts a more holistic stance and has a multi-sectoral approach to tourism development. Whilst one of the objectives is the long-term viability of tourism, the definition also acknowledges that tourism does not exist in isolation and thus, should only be developed in a manner that does not jeopardise the environment or threaten the survival of other sectors and activities (Butler, 1999; Hunter, 1995; Wall, 1997b). This definition of sustainable tourism development is well-rounded and clearly applies the futurity, holistic, and equity principles of sustainable development into tourism. For this reason, this definition of sustainable tourism development will be adopted within this research.

Following a review of literature, Butler (1999) contends that generally, as is the case with the definitions provided in Table 2.1, the term “sustainable tourism” is intended to be interpreted in line with definitions of sustainable tourism development - as tourism that is developed in line with the principles of sustainable development. Indeed, Clarke’s (1997) review of the different approaches to sustainable tourism (as illustrated diagrammatically in Table 2.2) suggests that the current phase of research adopts a “convergence” approach, which recognises the importance of the wider sustainable development framework and acknowledges that *all* tourism should be striving for sustainability, regardless of scale. Her paper does however also highlight one of the other significant misleading interpretations of the concept – the early conceptualisation

of sustainable tourism as specific, small-scale tourism enterprises that literally provided an alternative to mass tourism. Although largely, this mass-alternative dichotomy has been set aside in sustainable tourism research, there are many examples in practice where the term has been applied to small-scale individual tourism projects rather than used as a paradigmatic stance adopted by the wider tourism industry (Owen et al, 1993). This therefore continues to cause misunderstandings and result in operational difficulties.

As outlined in Table 2.2, within the convergence approach, Clarke (1997) suggests that tourism research is no longer focused on arriving at a precise definition, but instead on the movement of tourism enterprises towards the goal of sustainability. This is not surprising given that a vast amount of research in this area has already been undertaken and, to date, there is little movement towards a single overriding definition. Sustainable tourism development therefore remains a concept that is criticised for being too vague, ambiguous and open to interpretation. However, perhaps this is not necessarily a weakness. If a set definition were imposed, there is a possibility that some stakeholders may feel marginalised if their views did not align with that definition (Sharpley, 2009a). Furthermore, just like sustainable development, sustainable tourism development is ultimately a contextual issue and therefore arriving at a definition that suits everyone everywhere is practically impossible (Wall, 1997b). Given that it is a destination-specific concept, it is perhaps more appropriate to define it on a case by case basis (Manning, 1999) so that the concept can be used to address widely different situations and articulate appropriate development objectives (Tosun, 2001).



UNWTO (2010) clearly articulates the application of the three objectives of sustainable development to tourism when they state that sustainable tourism development should:

- “ 1) **Make optimal use of environmental resources** that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological process and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity;
- 2) **Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities**, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance;
- 3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, **providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders** that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities and contributing to poverty alleviation.”

(UNWTO, 2010)

This ‘triple bottom line’ considers the needs of the host community and the environment however it does not specifically refer to the role and needs of the tourists themselves. It is essential that tourism needs are met so that the destination can continue to attract visitors and support a long-term viable tourism industry. This issue is often neglected within sustainable tourism literature, with it taken for granted that destinations will inevitably experience tourism demand (Liu, 2003). However, this is not always the case and it is important not to assume that there will a constant flow of tourists to a destination. Tourism is vital for many areas, with income providing financial support to ensure the continued existence of destinations and their related economies and contributing to broader development goals (Cronin, 1990). Thus, in order to ensure the continuance of the industry, it is essential that tourists are provided with a high quality, value-for-money experience (Owen et al, 1993; UNWTO, 2010). This will ensure they leave satisfied and are willing to recommend the destination or revisit themselves in the future (Cater, 1991; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008). The challenge however, is in attracting enough visitors to keep the tourism industry active so that it contributes to wider development objectives, without attracting too many people so that the destination becomes over-crowded and physically and/or culturally exploited. Various visitor management techniques can be employed in efforts to

control visitor numbers and behaviour such as carrying capacities, zoning, interpretation and education. These strategies will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. However, at this stage, the point worth noting is that whilst visitor satisfaction sits alongside the three broader sustainability objectives, it is also reliant on them to a certain extent. Tourists are ultimately more likely to have a positive, meaningful experience at sites that are not culturally or physically exploited (Cater, 1991; Cronin, 1990; UNWTO, 2010). Furthermore, visitor experiences are thought to be heightened when they increase their understanding, appreciation and conservation of the destination environment (Ballantyne et al, 2011). Thus, if tourism as a sector is to be sustained in the long-term, the natural, cultural and historical assets that attract the visitors need to be maintained (McMinn, 1997) whilst tourists themselves become increasingly involved and aware of sustainability initiatives and their role within them.

As with broader sustainable development, there are various academics who propose that a balance needs to be achieved between the different objectives of sustainable tourism development (Liu, 2003; Müller, 1994; Owen et al, 1993). Farrell (1992) goes so far as to suggest that sustainability is actually an exercise in “fine-tuning” the various elements of the development system so that no one aspect “surges” to the detriment and impairment of the others. However, this is when sustainable development is considered in its broader context. When applied specifically to tourism, it is an incredibly contextual concept and thus Hunter (1997) argues that:

“there may always be a need to consider factors such as demand, supply, host community needs and desires and consideration of impacts on environmental resources; but sustainable tourism need not (indeed should not) imply that these often competing aspects are somehow to be balanced. In reality, trade-off decisions taken on a day to day basis will almost certainly produce priorities which emerge to skew the destination area based tourism/environment system in favour of certain aspects.” (Hunter, 1997: p.859)

There has been criticism that ecological aspects have been prioritised over social and cultural needs primarily because environmental issues have been on the public agenda for longer and thus, are more marketable (Butler, 1999; Twining-Ward, 1999).

However, this is not the case everywhere. Indeed, tourism is ultimately a context-specific industry. Each destination has its own unique environmental, cultural and social characteristics with complex economic, human and environmental interconnections (Bramwell & Lane, 1993a; Hunter, 1997). Thus, issues that may be deemed a priority for one area may not necessarily be relevant in other areas. Sustainable tourism development therefore needs to be interpreted with a certain amount of flexibility so that the individual needs of host environments and communities are catered for (Twining-Ward, 1999). Furthermore, destinations are not static and adaptive management strategies therefore need to be employed that respond to changes in the human and natural environment quickly and efficiently (Farrell, 1999; Wight, 2002). Thus, whilst the objectives of sustainable tourism development can be broadly identified (as visitor satisfaction, economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and social sustainability) more precise goals need to be defined by relevant stakeholders within each unique destination (Twining-Ward, 1999).

It is worth noting at this point though, that disparities in objective prioritisation will not only occur between destinations but also within them due to the heterogeneity of host communities. Largely, tourism stakeholders are all keen to ensure the longevity of the industry, at least for the period of their respective involvement. However, it is likely that there will be some disagreements over the emphasis given to certain objectives as the stances and priorities of stakeholders will inevitably differ (McMinn, 1997). For example, the primary concern for tourism industry professionals such as hoteliers, transport and attraction providers, may be economic objectives as essentially, this is their income and source of employment. Host communities are likely to stress the importance of socio-cultural aspects so that they may improve their quality of life, alleviate poverty and preserve local culture and traditions. Environmentalists and charities however, may consider tourism harmful to the natural and physical environment and thus accentuate the protection of these natural assets. Given the diverse opinions that can exist amongst stakeholders within a destination, it is essential that a participatory approach is adopted that involves all relevant stakeholders within the industry determining which objectives are negotiable and which are not. This will enable the integration of the stakeholders' needs into tourism planning and policies and ensure everyone is working towards the same common goal (Manning, 1999).

Similarly, the principles of sustainable tourism development are also destination-specific and thus, despite there being a considerable number published by various organisations and scholars associated with the industry, as yet there is no one definitive set of common principles (Garrod & Fyall, 1998; Sharpley, 2009a; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). A summary of some of the key principles and practical guidelines that have been proffered in policy and planning documents are presented in Table 2.3. Within these, it is possible to see not only the objectives of sustainable tourism development as outlined above, but also the incorporation and adaptation of the broader principles of sustainable development – a holistic approach, equity, futurity & compromise and participation. It is also apparent that these principles are relatively generic and simple. Garrod & Fyall (1998) imply that this is both their strength and their weakness. The principles provide concise, logical, non-technical guidelines which may appeal to stakeholders within the diverse and complex tourism industry. However, their simplicity and lack of detail fails to provide explicit instructions about what needs to be done to adhere to each principle and does not provide any metric information. Sustainable tourism development is therefore, once again, open to interpretation as the key questions of ‘what is to be sustained?’, ‘how can this be achieved?’ and ‘how will we know if this is achieved?’ remain unanswered.

However, given the centrality and importance attached to the notion of sustainable tourism development in this research, it was deemed important to establish a suitable and appropriate set of principles which could inform the research strategy herein. Thus, whilst it is acknowledged that the list provided in Table 2.3 is by no means exhaustive or universally accepted, by drawing on a number of policy documents and academic research, it serves as a good example of ‘typical’ principles which are broadly accepted. Thus, going forward in this thesis, any reference to ‘principles’ of sustainable tourism development should be taken to refer to this list. This is particularly significant in the coming chapters, which turn their attention to the presence, interpretation and operationalisation of sustainable tourism development within national parks specifically.

1. Tourism planning and development should adopt a long-term focus, with consideration given to the needs of future as well as current generations.
2. Tourism should be developed at a level appropriate to the destination environment and host community.
3. Host communities and other relevant stakeholders should be provided with the opportunity to engage with and participate in the planning, control and development of tourism.
4. Tourism development should provide benefits to both tourists and the host communities without compromising the natural and cultural environment.
5. A tourism strategy should be developed which acknowledges and integrates broader local, regional and national objectives and priorities.
6. Tourism exists alongside other economic sectors and should therefore be viewed as just one element of a balanced economy. It should neither dominate an area's economy nor be pursued at the exclusion of other industries.
7. Stakeholders should receive training and education about the importance of sustainable tourism development. This should include the responsible marketing of destinations, with relevant sustainable tourism priorities communicated to tourists and industry stakeholders.
8. Tourists should be provided with a high quality, value for money experience.
9. Tourism development should be respectful of the destination's culture, traditions, environment, economy and political structures.
10. On-going research and monitoring of tourism is vital so that adaptive management strategies can be employed if specific problems or opportunities arise.

**Table 2.3 A summary of sustainable tourism development principles and guidelines**

(Adapted from Cronin, 1990; Eber, 1992; EUROPARC, 2012; Owen et al, 1993; Sharpley, 2009a; UNEP/WTO, 2005; UNWTO, 2010)

### **2.6.3 Operational issues**

Almost twenty years ago, Müller (1994) suggested that sustainable tourism development theory was reaching a saturation point as many new studies failed to progress the existing debate. Since this time, there has continued to be a proliferation of research on the concept, most of which has focused on definitional difficulties and the formulation of principles (Liu, 2003). However, despite a significant amount of

rhetoric, there has been notably less guidance on how this can be translated into action (Twining-Ward, 1999; Welford et al, 1993). Little evidence has been presented about the overall effectiveness of sustainable tourism development in practice (Tosun & Jenkins, 1998) and thus, there is concern that it may become an empty cliché (Hardy et al, 2002; Müller, 1994). The misapprehensions evident within literature regarding the meaning and interpretation of sustainable tourism development have, rather unsurprisingly, followed the concept into practice. In some instances, the lack of an overriding definition and common understanding has resulted in stakeholders applying their own meanings to suit their requirements (McMinn, 1997). Other destinations, meanwhile, have been quick to market specific, small scale tourism forms as 'sustainable tourism' purely to promote a clean, green image of the industry. In many cases however, sustainable tourism has been adopted in name but not in operation as there is no evidence of a shift towards sustainable development principles either within the individual enterprises or the broader tourism sector (Butler, 1999). In such instances, sustainable tourism is little more than a marketing gimmick (Wall, 1997a).

Another operational difficulty stems from the tourists themselves. Sustainable tourism development cannot be achieved by the industry alone; tourists and their attitudes also have a key role to play (Mbaiwa, 2008). Whilst recent years have seen a growing awareness of society's impacts on the environment, Müller (1994: p.134) suggests this is outweighed by the "*hedonistic philosophy* of many people" as they prioritise their pleasure and enjoyment over any potential detrimental impacts their behaviour may have. An eagerness to explore new destinations and gain as much from the experience as possible has meant that tourists are neither sensitive nor sympathetic to their host environment and Wheeler (1992: p.104) suggests it is "naïve and unrealistic" to expect tourists to behave in any other way. Tourism is ultimately a consumptive industry and will inevitably always impact the quality and/or quantity of natural resources in some form (Hunter, 1997; McKercher, 1993). If sustainable tourism development is to be a long-term goal, tourists need to adapt their behaviour and understanding so that they are more respectful of host communities and the environment. However, this cannot be taken for granted and tourists should therefore be educated about the sustainability priorities of destinations, the impact their behaviour has on this environment and how

they can positively contribute to sustainable tourism development goals (Mbaiwa, 2008; Sharpley, 2002; Welford et al, 1999).

Sharpley (2000; 2009a) suggests that the operational difficulties are due to an underlying incompatibility of the tourism industry with sustainable development principles. Although theory and policies have been quick to espouse the principles, in practice, there are a number of issues which prevent their successful application, namely:

*1. A holistic approach*

Although sustainable development principles advocate a holistic approach, the policies guiding sustainable tourism development are often localised, sector-specific and inward-looking and fail to position themselves within the wider national or global context (Hunter, 1995; Sharpley, 2000). Very little attention is given to the industries that exist alongside tourism and in many instances, even less regard is paid to whether tourism is in fact the correct development option for that specific area (Hunter, 1995; Sharpley, 2009a). Thus, despite research stressing the importance of cohesion amongst internal and external stakeholders, the sector often remains largely disjointed in its approach to sustainable tourism development.

*2. Futurity*

The tourism industry is characterised by its “quick buck mentality” (Cronin, 1990) and there has been a reluctance to adopt a longer-term focus that considers the needs of future generations. Particularly in developing countries and marginalised, rural areas, the focus is often on the short-term development of a profitable tourism sector to combat socio-economic problems such as high unemployment and poverty (Tosun, 2001). Furthermore, given the impossibility of predicting the future, there is no guarantee that tourism development will meet the needs of future generations, nor even that the broader demand for tourism will continue at the rate it is now. Thus, the long-term sustainability of the sector is by no means guaranteed. The best that many sustainable tourism projects can promise

therefore is that they can provide short-term socio-economic benefits and be environmentally benign (Sharpley, 2009a).

### 3. *Equity & Compromise*

Many tourism policies stress the importance of inclusion and collaborative tourism planning with the aim of ensuring the equitable distribution of the benefits of tourism development (Inskeep, 1991). However, in practice, international tourism is still dominated by larger, more dominant organisations. Consequently, tourism flows and their associated economic benefits therefore remain largely regionalised, specifically in America and Europe (Brohman, 1996; Sharpley, 2000). Furthermore, the trade-offs between objectives are by no means easy and often result in a continued emphasis on ecological goals rather than socio-cultural priorities (Tosun & Jenkins, 1998).

### 4. *Participation*

In theory, sustainable tourism development requires equal access to decision-making by all stakeholders including the local community (Mbaiwa, 2008). However, whilst many tourism policies incorporate participation within their key objectives, this is often unattainable due to the lack of democratic institutions and processes (Tosun & Jenkins, 1998). Communities are often at the mercy of the external influences that control the tourism industry and more importantly, access to the natural resources on which tourism relies. In practice, participation is therefore at best challenging and at worst, elusive (Tosun, 2000).

As a global industry with a presence in virtually every country, trying to change the tourism paradigm *en masse* is a huge undertaking. Yet whilst sustainable tourism development is a global objective, it is at the national, regional and local levels where it is most relevant (Hunter, 1997). Indeed, there is no universal answer to the key questions of 'what needs to be sustained?', 'how can this be achieved?' and 'how will we know when this is achieved?' and it is pointless to try to answer them at a global level. As discussed in Section 2.6.2, the precise goals, objectives and principles of sustainable tourism development will be determined by stakeholders at a localised level and defined according to the unique context of the destination (Sharpley, 2009a;

Twining-Ward, 1999). Each destination will therefore assess the key impacts affecting them specifically and then employ their own management strategies to guide and monitor sustainable tourism development. The importance of context cannot and should not therefore be underestimated.

A significant amount of research in this field examines small scale examples of sustainable tourism 'successes' (Binns & Nel, 2002; Mbaiwa, 2008; Owen et al, 1993). Many of these present case studies illustrating how specific planning and management strategies have been employed to meet individual sustainable development objectives. For example, numerous studies focus solely on stakeholder engagement, the hardening of resources, and capacity limitations *inter alia*. However, few studies consider the broader approach adopted within destinations; how they attempt to encompass the principles of sustainable tourism development into *all* elements of their planning and management and how effective they are in achieving this. It is this broader stance which will be analysed within this research. By utilising two case studies, it will evaluate the approaches adopted within two specific contexts that are inherently sensitive to environmental effects and analyse how the principles of sustainable tourism development are interpreted and adapted to suit the needs of each destination.

Existing studies of individual planning and management approaches should not be disparaged however. Such studies have received criticism by some as being "at best small-scale isolated examples of 'success' – micro solutions to what patently remains a macro problem" (Wheeller, 1992: p.105). Indeed, whilst the overall aim is to shift the *global* tourism paradigm towards sustainable tourism development, this will take time and can only be achieved gradually. Such studies therefore represent examples of individual successes. Their findings can not necessarily be translated into a generic macro formula that can be applied everywhere due to the complex, cumbersome and uncontrollable nature of the global tourism sector (Sharpley, 2009a; Wheeler, 1991). However, if the lessons learnt from successes at one destination can be applied elsewhere, the industry may be able to make gradual changes and, destination by destination, embrace a new sustainable tourism development paradigm.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an essential conceptual background for the key theoretical underpinnings of this research and specifically, the notion of sustainable tourism development. The term draws from an array of different disciplines and is incredibly complex. This chapter was therefore necessary to establish a solid grounding in these different disciplines, develop an understanding of key principles and develop a foundation for the research.

As a growth industry revered for its potential economic benefits, tourism has long been perceived as a viable development option in both developed and developing countries. However, as tourism volume has increased, a “tourism-development dilemma” has arisen as the economic benefits have been accompanied by negative social and environmental impacts (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). A proposed solution to this dilemma has been sustainable tourism development; a concept which applies the principles and objectives of sustainable development to the specificities of the tourism industry. Sustainable tourism development is a concept heavily rooted in development theory and specifically, its parental paradigm, sustainable development. Section 2.3 of this chapter examined the evolution of broader development theory, with specific reference to four dominant paradigms: modernisation theory, dependency theory, economic neo-liberalism and alternative development. Largely, these theories have evolved from traditional top-down economic growth based models to more holistic bottom-up approaches that encompass social, cultural and environmental dimensions (Sharpley, 2000; 2009a).

The latest paradigm to emerge, sustainable development, represents the convergence of development theory with environmental sustainability. As a concept, it was first presented by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 and since then, has become something of a buzzword, with organisations and individuals at all levels making commitments to sustainable development goals. Despite this wide adoption, sustainable development is heavily criticised for a number of reasons: its oxymoronic dimensions, vague nature, multiple interpretations and inherent ambiguities *inter alia*. However, it has been suggested that sustainable development is a purposely ambiguous concept so it can be utilised in a multitude of divergent disciplines and be

'palatable' to everyone (Skolimowski, 1995). It is a concept whose details need to be 'fine-tuned' to the specific context and discipline in which it is being applied. This not only applies to the interpretation of the concept, but also to its objectives. Sustainable development largely consists of three interdependent and mutually reinforcing objectives: economic, social and environmental sustainability. These objectives are nested within each other (Giddings et al, 2002) and theoretically, require the achievement of a balance in order to achieve sustainable development. In practice though, this balance is often elusive due to the ever-changing environment and the varying contexts in which it is applied. However, despite this contextualism, sustainable development ultimately adopts a much broader focus and thus, is underpinned by four guiding principles: a holistic approach, futurity, equity and compromise and participation.

The evolution of development theory from modernisation theory through to sustainable development is largely mirrored in tourism research. Jafari (1990; 2001) charts the progression of tourism scholarship from the early pro-tourism stances in the advocacy platform, through to the inclusive approach that embraces socio-cultural, environmental and economic dimensions, as seen in the knowledge-based platform. It is within this platform that sustainable tourism development emerged.

Sustainable tourism development arose as a result of two issues: the increased concern over the negative impacts of mass tourism and the widespread adoption of the broader sustainable development paradigm. Largely defined as the specific application of sustainable development principles within the tourism industry, it has rapidly become a guiding principle in tourism policy and planning and has featured heavily within tourism academia in recent years. Yet, research in this area is often patchy, disjointed, littered with uncertainties and plagued by terminology issues (Liu, 2003). Just like sustainable development, numerous interpretations have been proposed. This is not necessarily a bad thing however. As the concept is destination-specific, the interpretation, prioritisation of objectives and guiding principles are determined according to the unique social, political, cultural, economic and ecological environment in which it is being applied. Thus, sustainable tourism development should be viewed as an adaptive

paradigm “capable of addressing widely different situations and articulating different goals” (Hunter, 1997: p.864).

Despite the significant amount of rhetoric, sustainable tourism development has been slow to move from theory to practice. This has been attributed in part to stakeholders’ misunderstandings over the meaning of the concept, a lack of a unified industry approach, tourists’ ‘hedonistic’ behaviour and the inherent incompatibility of the tourism industry with sustainable development principles. However, evidence of sustainable tourism development ‘successes’ have been observed in localised case studies and individual micro-level projects. Whilst this is something of a ‘micro solution to a macro problem’ (Wheeller, 1991; 1992), there is little alternative when it comes to operationalising sustainable tourism development. To enable a shift in the global tourism paradigm towards sustainable tourism development, each destination must develop planning and management strategies which are appropriate to their unique social, economic, political, cultural and environmental contexts. Whilst studies may provide only small-scale examples of successes, it is through these that lessons can be learned and applied in other destinations and broader contexts. This research specifically focuses on the approaches to sustainable tourism development within national parks. The following chapter therefore seeks to establish and explore national park contexts before chapter 4 moves on to examine planning and management approaches which encompass sustainable tourism development principles.

## Chapter 3

### NATIONAL PARKS & TOURISM

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#### 3.1 Introduction

Having established the importance of context within the operationalisation of sustainable tourism development, this chapter is centred around the contextual dimension of this research, namely, national parks. The term 'national park' is well utilised all over the world but in a wide variety of different contexts. Broadly, national parks can be referred to as 'protected areas' however, the size, location, purpose and management structure of these areas can vary significantly. Section 3.2 discusses the *International Union for the Conservation of Nature's* (IUCN) proposed definition of protected areas before moving on to examine their *Protected Area Management Categories*. This international framework divides protected areas into six categories (with Category I further subdivided into Ia and Ib) according to their primary management objective. The framework provides an "important global standard for the planning, establishment and management of protected areas" (IUCN, 2008: p. 5). It is intended for widespread use and therefore provides broad, general guidance that can be interpreted flexibly (Phillips & Harrison, 1999). Whilst the framework includes *Category II: National Parks*, there are a great number of protected areas which refer to themselves as 'national parks' but which are actually recognised within a different protected area management category. The UK national parks are a prime example of this. Hall & Frost (2009b) suggest that the variation in the designation of national parks lies in the historical development of the concept. Furthermore, Boyd & Butler (2000) suggest that:

"it is impossible to understand, and hope to be able to resolve many of the current issues facing national parks in the context of tourism without understanding the origins of the parks and their links with tourism"

(Boyd & Butler, 2000: p. 14)

On this basis, Section 3.3 examines the history of the national park concept, from its first use in America in 1872 to its wide adoption around the world during the twentieth

century. Section 3.4 then moves on to discuss the various applications of the term and specifically, the debates that have arisen surrounding what exactly constitutes a national park. Despite there being vast differences in national park definitions and models, the majority retain two fundamental but often conflicting objectives at their core: environmental conservation and tourism. Section 3.5 focuses on the latter and discusses the growing volume of tourism in national parks, a phenomenon which has had both positive and negative impacts on parks' socio-cultural and ecological environments (Hall & Lew, 2009). Finally, Section 3.6 will examine the increasingly complex relationship between tourism and conservation and the implications this has for planning and management within national parks.

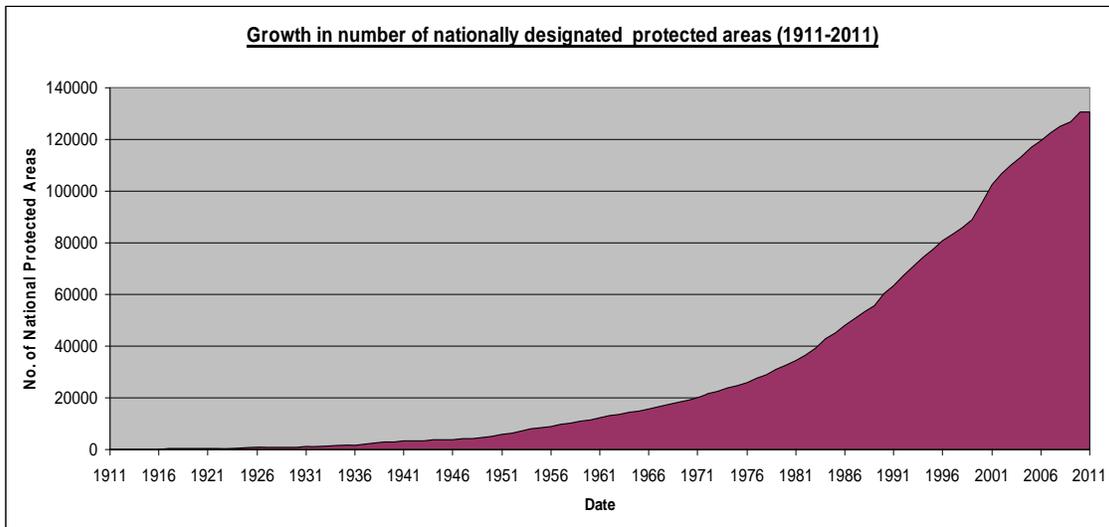
### **3.2 National parks as protected areas**

'National Park' is a concept with multiple meanings. Since its first application to the Yellowstone area in the United States of America in 1872, the term has been applied to many different destinations of varying size, location, purpose and managerial structures (Hall & Frost, 2009a). Largely, national parks can be described as protected areas, a term the IUCN define as:

"A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values"

(IUCN, 2008: p.8)

Protected areas are a key element of many national conservation and development strategies (Ezebilo & Mattsson, 2010; Nelson, 1987). National governments designate protected areas to minimise the negative impacts of consumptive land use and slow or prevent the decline of natural resources (Holden, 2000). Although some protected areas have important social and economic functions, primarily they are established to conserve biological and cultural diversity and minimise the negative impacts of human activities (Mason, 2005). It is not surprising therefore that the majority of protected areas have been designated since the 1970s (as illustrated in figure 3.1), when environmentalism became increasingly important on the global and national political agendas.



**Figure 3.1: Growth in number of nationally designated protected areas (1911-2011)**

(Data Source: WDPA, 2012)

In 2011, there were 130,709 nationally recognised protected areas around the world (WDPA, 2012). However, the term ‘protected area’ is used to describe a variety of unique and very diverse habitats and natural areas. There is not only a significant variation in the location and size of protected areas, but also in the purpose of the site and the management and conservation strategies adopted. As an increasing number of nations designate their own protected areas, there has been a distinct lack of universal understanding over their purpose, intended use and management systems. In an effort to reconcile this problem, efforts were made to establish protected area categories that could be used worldwide to help define the purpose of protected areas and develop universal management and conservation standards (IUCN, 2008).

The IUCN established *Protected Area Management Categories* in the 1970s and, following significant revisions in 1994 and 2008, these are now widely adopted by both national and international bodies. The *Protected Area Management Categories* is a framework that divides protected areas into six categories (with category I subdivided into Ia and Ib) according to their primary management objective. The latest description of each of the categories provided by the IUCN is shown in Table 3.1.

Category	Description
Category Ia: Strict Nature Reserve	Strictly protected areas set aside to protect biodiversity and also possibly geological/geomorphological features where human visitation, use and impacts are strictly controlled and limited to ensure protection of the conservation values. Such protected area can serve as indispensable reference areas for scientific research and monitoring.
Category Ib: Wilderness Area	Usually large unmodified or slightly modified areas, retaining their natural character and influence without permanent or significant human habitation which are protected and managed so as to preserve their natural condition.
Category II: National Parks	Large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristics of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreation and visitor opportunities.
Category III: Natural Monument or Feature	Protected areas are set aside to protect a specific natural monument which can be a landform sea mount, submarine cavern, geological feature such as a cave or even a living feature such as an ancient grove. They are generally quite small protected areas and often have high visitor value.
Category IV: Habitat/Species Management Area	Aim to protect particular species or habitats and management reflects this priority. Many category IV protected areas will need to have regular, active interventions to address the requirement of particular species or to maintain habitats but this is not a requirement of the category.
Category V: Protected Landscape/Seascape	A protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.
Category VI: Protected Area with Sustainable use of natural resources	Protected areas conserve ecosystems and habitats together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. They are generally large with most of the area in a natural condition where a proportion is under sustainable natural resource management and where low level non-industrial use of natural resources compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims of the area.

**Table 3.1: IUCN Protected Areas Categories System**

(IUCN, 2008: pp. 13-23)

The framework was originally intended to help collate data and information on the different types and purposes of protected areas. However, it has evolved to become a much more complex tool which provides a “common language by which managers, planners, researchers, politicians and citizen groups in all countries [can] exchange information and views” (IUCN/WCMC, 1994: p.10). The Categories can be used for a variety of purposes including planning, regulation setting, resource use negotiations and information management (IUCN, 2008). They are also particularly useful in the development and administration of Management Plans, a statutory tool required by all IUCN protected areas. Management Plans are used to define the area’s key objectives, outline the priorities for the area now and in the future and ensure that optimum outcomes are achieved (IUCN, 2003).

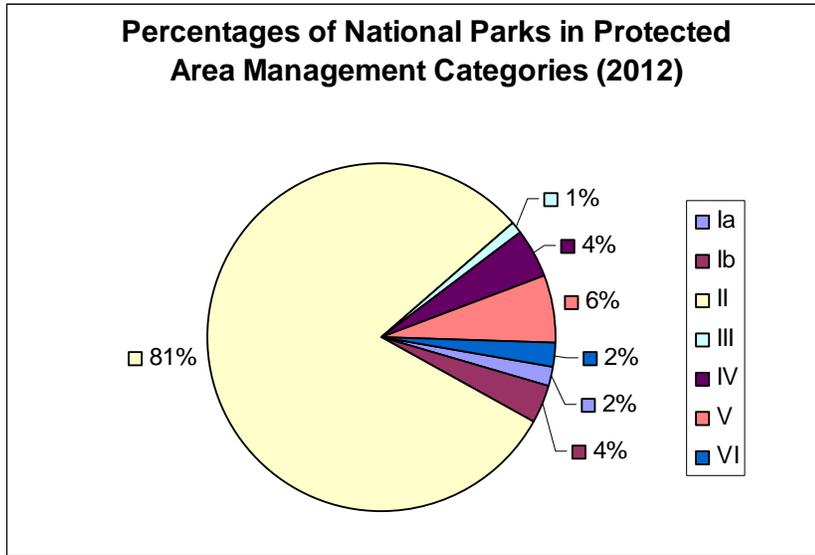
In their 2008 *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories*, the IUCN outlined a number of key principles for the categorisation system. The most significant principle related to the process of categorisation. The IUCN highlighted the importance of determining which category was most appropriate according to the area’s primary management objective. Although many protected areas will have a number of different (and sometimes conflicting) objectives (as illustrated in Table 3.2), it is important to ascertain which of these is the most significant as at least three quarters of the area should be managed for this primary purpose (Phillips & Harrison, 1999). Whilst all protected areas are concerned with biodiversity protection, as Table 3.2 illustrates, for many categories, this is not their only priority and very often, an area actually has a different primary objective. It is particularly interesting to note the significance of tourism and recreation as a management objective within all but one of the categories. This demonstrates the importance of tourism within protected areas (and specifically national parks) and its fundamental role in protected area management more generally. This point will be discussed and elaborated on in more detail in Section 3.6 of this chapter.

Management Objectives	Categories						
	Ia	Ib	II	III	IV	V	VI
Scientific Research	1	3	2	2	2	2	3
Wilderness Protection	2	1	2	3	3	-	2
Preserve species and genetic diversity	1	2	1	1	1	2	1
Maintain environmental services	2	1	1	-	1	2	1
Protection of special features	-	-	2	1	3	1	3
<b>Tourism and recreation*</b>	-	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
Education	-	-	2	2	2	2	3
Sustainable use of resources	-	3	3	-	2	2	1
Maintenance of cultural/traditional attributes	-	-	-	-	-	1	2

**Table 3.2: Matrix of Management Objectives** Source: IUCN (1994: p.8 *-emphasis added*)

Key: 1 = Primary Objective                      2 = Secondary Objective  
 3 = Acceptable objectives                      - = Not applicable

The *Protected Area Management Categories* is an international system and has been adopted by protected areas all over the world. Consequently, the description and guidance provided by the IUCN is purposefully vague so as to allow flexible interpretations. If the details were more prescriptive, countries may have difficulty in applying them in their specific context and they would be of limited value (Phillips & Harrison, 1999). However, it is important to remember that the names of the categories are also for international purposes only (Barker & Stockdale, 2008). The national names of protected areas can vary significantly and across the world, hundreds of different names are used regardless of their categorisation (Phillips & Harrison, 1999). This is particularly significant for areas which refer to themselves as national parks. The naming of protected areas remains a national responsibility and it is important to note that areas which refer to themselves as national parks are not necessarily positioned within Category II on the framework. In actuality, as Figure 3.2 shows, almost 35% of the protected areas which refer to themselves as national parks are actually designated in other Protected Area Categories. Unsurprisingly then, arriving at a universally accepted definition of a national park is somewhat difficult.



**Figure 3.2: Percentages of National Parks in Protected Area Management Categories**

(Data Source: WDPA, 2012)

Discussions surrounding the definition of national parks will be revisited in Section 3.4 of this chapter. However, at this stage, the chapter shifts its focus to consider the origins and historical development of the national park concept, in order to understand the various approaches to national park designation and appreciate tourism's vital role within them (Butler & Boyd, 2000; Hall & Frost, 2009b).

### 3.3 Historical Context

The first national park was designated at Yellowstone in America in 1872. Following this, Hall & Frost (2009a) suggest that the development and evolution of the concept can be divided into three broad stages: 1. the 'New World' countries; 2. the Asian and African colonies and; 3. the major European powers. This section is therefore divided into four sections to reflect first, the origins of the concept and then the specified stages of development.

### 3.3.1 Origins of the concept – Yellowstone National Park

Although the first national park was designated in America in 1872, it was 40 years prior to this that the concept was actually born (Nash, 1970). In 1832, whilst studying American Indians in the wilderness near South Dakota, George Catlin was among the first to highlight the negative impact of rapidly expanding civilisation on the environment and its wildlife. He expressed the need for the government to preserve the area for everyone's benefit and noted in his journal:

“What a beautiful and thrilling specimen for America to preserve and hold up to the views of her refined citizens and the world, in future ages. ***A nation's park*** containing man and beast in all the wild and freshness of their nature's beauty” (Catlin, 1841:pp.261-262; quoted in Boyd & Butler, 2000: p.15- *emphasis added*)

Following Catlin's observations and ideas, concern over the impact of human settlement on the natural environment escalated. By the mid-nineteenth century, America was ensconced in an era of urbanisation, deforestation, resource exploitation and destruction of the natural environment and consequently, there were increasing calls for wilderness preservation (Boyd & Butler, 2000). Concurrently, during this period America was also conscious of their lack of cultural heritage and national identity, both of which were considered fundamental qualities for countries pertaining to be 'major powers' (Frost & Hall, 2009c; Shultis, 1995). Their status as a new country meant that they lacked historical monuments as well as the literary and artistic heritage that was present in their Western European counterparts. America therefore turned their attention to the monumental landscapes present within their natural environment (Boyd & Butler, 2000). Unlike Europe, America possessed significantly vast areas of natural landscape whose “natural marvels...compensated for America's lack of old cities, aristocratic traditions and similar reminders of Old World accomplishments” (Runte, 1987: p.22). Designating such areas as national parks therefore not only ensured their preservation but also helped America to promote a distinct national identity based around these 'scenic wonders', a point Frost & Hall reinforce when they state that “in creating national parks, nations are clearly making a statement about who they are and how they wish to be seen by both their citizens and the international community” (Frost & Hall, 2009c: p.65).

America's interest in preserving monumental elements of the landscape led to the establishment of the world's first national park. On 1 March 1872, over two million acres of land in north-western Wyoming was designated as Yellowstone National Park. The area was considered 'worthless' as it was deemed unsuitable for settlement and lacked sufficient exploitable materials such as timber, minerals or agricultural land (Frost & Hall, 2009c). The area was therefore "reserved and withdrawn from settlement, occupancy or sale... and set apart as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people" (Boyd & Butler, 2000; Nash, 1970). Initially, it was not the wilderness per se that was the object of the protection but the geysers, hot springs, canyons and waterfalls. Indeed, the 'scenic wonders' in Yellowstone were revered not only for their monumentalism but also for the economic opportunities and potential they offered through the pursuit of tourism. The public's growing interest in wilderness areas together with development of railway infrastructure increased the potential of the area to develop tourism revenues (Frost & Hall, 2009a; Shultis, 1995). However, domestic tourism and recreational visits were rare due to the parks location being a considerable distance from major populations. Early visitors therefore tended to be tourists who were "affluent, privileged individuals, frequently foreign" who were willing to travel great distances, stay overnight and visit national parks as part of their experience of the 'New World' (Butler & Boyd, 2000: p.6). In order to accommodate these visitors, the park needed to develop adequate accommodation and tourism facilities. However, this development needed to be broached sensitively so that the area was not overexploited, as had been experienced elsewhere in America (a prime example being the area surrounding Niagara Falls). Even during the planning stages of Yellowstone, discussions abounded regarding the potential of specific sites which could be fenced off and promoted as key attractions with visitors charged an admission fee. Such overdevelopment was avoided to a large extent by the public ownership of Yellowstone, which permitted an appropriate level of development of tourism facilities without exploiting the area (Frost & Hall, 2009a).

Yellowstone National Park provided a blueprint for other national parks both in America and around the world. However, whilst the concept was enthusiastically embraced by the other New World economies (as discussed in 3.3.2 below), 20 years lapsed before another national park was designated in the America. The US national

parcs that were established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (as shown in Table 3.3) were however reminiscent of the Yellowstone model, incorporating spectacular monumental scenery with a focus on recreation and tourism (Frost & Hall, 2009a).

Year	Name	Area (sq. km)	Description
1890	Yosemite	3,080	Located in east-central California, it incorporates the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Key features include vast swathes of granite cliffs, waterfalls and Giant Sequoia groves.
1890	Sequoia	1, 635	Located in California, the park includes the southern area of the Sierra Nevada mountain range as well as vast woodland. Of particular importance are the Giant Sequoias and the park contains the General Sherman Tree, purported to be one of the oldest trees in the world.
1899	Mount Rainier	954	Located in Washington state, it contains all of Mount Rainier, a composite volcano. Surrounding it are valleys, waterfalls, wildflower meadows, forestland and glaciers.
1902	Crater Lake	741	Located in South Oregon, it encompasses the Crater Lake caldera which is situated within the remains of a destroyed volcano. Surrounding land is primarily forest and hills.
1910	Glacier	4,100	Located in Montana, it has 26 glaciers and 130 lakes within the Rocky Mountains. It provides wilderness habitation for over 1000 species of animals including wolverine, lynx and grizzly bears.
1915	Rocky Mountain	1,075	Located in Colorado, it incorporates the continental divide and Colorado river. It's primary features include the Front Range mountains, montane forests, grasslands and alpine tundra.

**Table 3.3: US National Parks designated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Data Source: USNPS, 2012; WDP, 2012)**

### 3.3.2 The New World – Canada, New Zealand and Australia

The national park concept soon spread from America to the other 'New World' economies of Canada, New Zealand and Australia. This rapid adoption of the concept

was not surprising given their common language, high literacy levels and shared cultural heritage (Frost & Hall, 2009b). As with America, these New World nations were also looking to reinforce their national identity and saw national parks as a key means of achieving this (Frost & Hall, 2009c).

Canada's first national park was designated around the Banff Hot Springs Reserve in 1887. It closely followed America's Yellowstone model in a number of ways, namely: the protected area focused on the hot springs as opposed to the wilderness; the land was considered 'worthless'; the designation was aimed to protect the area from rapid commercial development and; one of the key purposes of the park was to promote the economic value of tourism (Boyd & Butler, 2009; Frost & Hall, 2009b). Furthermore, at the time of Banff's designation, railways were rapidly developing all over Canada, providing support for the national park concept and improved access to previously hard to reach areas. In the following years, the development of the railways continued to play a key role in creation of new national parks. As Canada's infrastructure developed, visitors were enticed to new areas and tourism became a major source of revenue and was subsequently perceived as a key tool for regional development (Frost & Hall, 2009b).

As with the US and Canada, it was New Zealand's recognition of the economic value of hot springs and natural wonders that contributed to the establishment of their first national parks (Shultis, 1995). New Zealand's first national park consisted of the hot springs district of land surrounding and incorporating the three central volcanoes of the North Island. Originally, the land was gifted to the Crown by the local Maori Tribe who were concerned that the area would be lost or destroyed by development. The land had cultural and spiritual significance to the tribe and in an effort to protect it for future generations, Maori Chief Te Heuheu Tukino provided the land for the formation of a public park in 1887 (Booth & Simmons, 2000). It was not until 1894 however, that Tongariro National Park was officially established. The delay in designation is attributed to the government's concern about the 'worthlessness' of the area. As with Canada and America, they believed that only worthless land could be incorporated into the park and it took a number of years to establish that the area had no settlement potential or other economic value (Frost & Hall, 2009b). The attractiveness of the area did however

provide significant potential to stimulate economic development through tourism. The government were therefore keen to showcase the wilderness and scenic landscapes to help establish their national identity and increase the number of tourists and recreational visitors to the area. Tourism therefore became fundamental to the Tongariro National Park, sitting alongside preservation as a key objective. In subsequent years, as the national park concept spread throughout New Zealand, tourism continued to be important and significantly influenced park designation and management (Booth & Simmons, 2000).

In contrast to New Zealand and Canada, Australia deviated from the US' Yellowstone model from the outset, most notably in the size, purpose and governance of their national parks. Their first national park was established in 1879. Simply named 'The National Park' (although later renamed as the Royal National Park in 1955), it was an area of coastal bush-land on the outskirts of Sydney (Shultis, 1995). Although it was a large area incorporating a wide range of natural features, none of them were considered particularly 'monumental' (Frost & Hall, 2009b). The protectionism was a response to the significant urbanisation and development of Australia's south western coastline. The New South Wales government were concerned about the environmental conditions and public health of Sydney residents, and therefore established the national park for the recreational use by the city's residents (Frost & Hall, 2009b; Shultis, 1995). Australia's other self-governing colonies soon followed this example and by 1916, South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania had all established national parks which were designed for mass recreation in close proximity to their capital cities (Shultis, 1995).

### **3.3.3 The African and Asian Colonies**

By the end of World War I, the first national parks were beginning to be established in developing countries in Africa and Asia. Unlike national parks in the New World, these areas were principally concerned with the protection of wildlife instead of the preservation of monumental scenery (Frost & Hall, 2009b). In Africa, their designation was primarily a result of the colonial powers' increasing concerns over the devastating impact of over-hunting and the extensive ivory trade. In 1900, Britain, France,

Germany, Italy and Portugal all signed the Convention for the Preservation of Animals, Birds and Fish in Africa; an environmental agreement aimed to protect game animals, control the trade of produce and suggest conservation initiatives. However, this Convention was never implemented and it therefore fell to individual colonial powers to devise and enforce their own conservation measures. Whilst Britain tried to implement licences and closed seasons, Germany introduced the notion of game reserves – a defined protected area where shooting was strictly prohibited (Jepson & Whittaker, 2002). These reserves were widely revered by the public for providing an immediate solution to the over-hunting problem and they soon became adopted by other colonial powers and, arguably “are the foundations for the present-day national park and conservation system in southern and eastern Africa” (Frost & Hall, 2009b: p.39).

Despite an array of game reserves, Africa did not have any national parks until 1925, when, following a visit to Yellowstone, Belgium established the Albert National Park in the Belgian Congo. The primary purpose of this national park was to protect the mountain gorillas and the park was therefore initially prohibited to members of the public (Jepson & Whittaker, 2002). In contrast, a year later South Africa established Kruger National Park with one of the primary objectives being the pursuit of tourism to stimulate regional development. Although Kruger looked to Yellowstone for guidance, the national park that developed was very different and focused on the preservation of animals instead of displaying the vast area’s geographical scenery. Kruger therefore became synonymous as a ‘game sanctuary’ as much as it was a national park (Carruthers, 2009).

In 1930, the British colonies conducted research into the status of the wildlife and potential for areas to be designated as new national parks in East and Central Africa. The findings confirmed that many species were under threat and suggested that the “only sure way to ensure long-term survival was to separate man and nature through the establishment of sanctuaries that would be ‘inviolable for eternity’” (Jepson & Whittaker, 2002: p.141). However, whilst this research encouraged the designation of national parks, it was not until after World War II that Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika

adopted the concept and established the 'pioneer national parks' Africa is synonymous with today (Akama, 1999; Frost & Hall, 2009b).

To a great extent, the establishment of national parks in Africa led the way for developments in Asia. Prior to the 1930s, there was very little evidence of Asia adopting the national park concept on the same scale as had been experienced in Africa. Frost & Hall (2009b) suggest this could be attributed to two reasons. Firstly, Asian wildlife did not have the same status as African game species amongst hunters and thus was not considered as endangered. Secondly, the nature of colonialism in Asia was very different to Africa. Not only were European powers more reluctant to displace local rulers and disregard land rights due to the growing nationalist movements, but there was a broader range of colonial powers (including China and Thailand) who were all assertive in maintaining their independence (Frost & Hall, 2009b). Although there are some examples of national parks established before the 1930s (most notably Angkor National Park in Cambodia in 1924) (Creswell & MacLaren, 2000), it was not until after this time that the national park concept really gained credence in Asia, with a quick succession of parks designated in a number of countries, most notably:

- Malaya and Ceylon in 1938;
- the Dutch East Indies between 1932 and 1940. The Dutch established 17 wildlife sanctuaries which were recognised as national park equivalents despite not using the term. They were later to be re-designated as national parks in 1980 (Jepson & Whittaker, 2002).
- Japan between 1934 and 1936. Japan designated 12 national parks primarily in the mountainous volcanic regions that mirrored the monumental landscapes of Yellowstone. Unlike other national parks in Asia, the Japanese national parks' primary purpose was not preservation but to illustrate their culture, strong values and growing nationalism (Hall & Frost, 2009b).

### **3.3.4 Europe and the Major Powers**

Europe's first national parks were established at the beginning of the twentieth century in countries deemed to be 'lesser powers'. Sweden in 1909, Switzerland in 1914 and Spain in 1918 all designated national parks in sparsely populated and mountainous

regions (Mose & Weixlbaumer, 2007). Given their lack of colonies, it is suggested that their national park designations were intended to symbolise their power and promote a stronger national identity (Frost & Hall, 2009b). This is somewhat similar to the situation following World War I, when Italy (in 1922), Iceland (in 1928), Poland (in 1932) Romania (in 1935) and Greece (in 1938), all countries with a history of being dominated by the major European powers, designated national parks in an effort to affirm their national identities. The major European powers of Britain, France and Germany however did not establish national parks until after World War II, in 1949, 1963 and 1969 respectively. This was primarily due to the cultural and environmental factors contained in Table 3.4.

1. <b>Comparisons with the US:</b> Yellowstone was renowned for its monumental scenery and it was widely believed that there was no comparable area of land within their countries.
2. <b>National parks were for colonies:</b> Significant energy was therefore spent establishing the colonial national parks.
3. <b>Lack of public land:</b> Most land was in private ownership and therefore it would be very expensive to their respective governments to acquire the amount of land required for a national park.
4. <b>Cultural confidence:</b> All three countries had strong cultural heritage, historical backgrounds and tourist appeal and therefore did not feel the need to assert their national identities through national parks.
5. <b>Other priorities:</b> Various political issues diverted the governments' attention, including the two World Wars and the Great Depression.

**Table 3.4: Cultural and environmental reasons for the delay in designating national parks in Britain, France and Germany** (Adapted from Frost & Hall, 2009b: p.41)

Whilst the national parks of continental Europe largely followed the US' Yellowstone example, the national park model that developed in the UK was very different (Frost & Hall, 2009b). Instead of being areas set aside for environmental conservation, they were "cultural landscapes that have been materially altered by human occupation" (Frost & Hall, 2009a: p.6). However, given the UK's late establishment of national parks, this is perhaps unsurprising. The UK's first four national parks were designated in 1951, at a time when the countryside was already a 'living, working landscape' with a rural economy that was dominated by commercial agriculture (Parker & Ravenscroft,

2000). It would have been impossible to follow the US' Yellowstone model *verbatim* and consequently, the UK established their own unique national park system characterised by "inhabited, multipurpose and principally privately owned landscapes" (Sharpley, 2009b: p.156).

The national park concept was adopted in the UK after World War II, at a time when Britain was experiencing significant social change. There was a desire to regenerate and it was thought that national parks and access to the countryside were vital to bolster Britain's image and improve public well-being (Sharpley, 2003). John Dower, an architect and town planner, was therefore requested to write a report on the general issues surrounding the establishment of national parks (Sheail, 1975). Published in 1945, the report recognised from the outset that whilst the UK's national parks would be similar to existing parks "in scale and purpose", they would differ significantly "in application" (Litke, 1998). Rather than nature conservation *per se*, Dower considered the primary purpose of the UK's national parks to be **landscape** protection and improved access for recreational purposes (Parker & Ravenscroft, 2000). This was reflected in Dower's definition of national parks as:

"an extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation's benefit and by appropriate national decision and action:

- The characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved
- Access and facilities for public open-air enjoyment are amply provided
- Wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected while
- Established farming use is effectively maintained."

(Dower, 1945: p6)

The UK's variation on the US' Yellowstone model is not surprising given the vast differences in the landscapes of the two countries. Indeed, the US owned and were able to section off large areas of land they considered 'worthless' for conservation purposes. The UK government however simply did not own vast quantities of the landscape and it was therefore impossible to replicate the Yellowstone model. Indeed,

Dower recommended ten areas for national park designation however the majority of these were privately owned and incorporated farms, villages and even towns (Frost & Hall, 2009b). He did not see this as a problem however and believed that “if national parks are provided **for** the nation they should clearly be provided **by** the nation” (Dower, 1945: p.14-emphasis added). This has resulted in a national park model that consists of a variety of owners, managers and land uses and thus is characterised by “a plurality of ownership and management interests” (Parker & Ravenscroft, 2000: p.95).

Year	National Park name	Area (sq. km)	Population*	Visitors per year (million)*
1951	Peak District, England	1437	38,000	8.4
1951	Lake District, England	2292	42,200	15.8
1951	Dartmoor, England	953	34,000	2.4
1951	Snowdonia, Wales	2176	25,482	4.27
1952	Pembrokeshire Coast, Wales	621	22,800	4.2
1952	North York Moors, England	1434	25,000	7
1954	Exmoor, England	694	10,600	1.4
1954	Yorkshires Dales, England	1769	19,654	9.5
1956	Northumberland, England	1048	2,200	1.5
1957	Brecon Beacons, Wales	1344	32,000	4.15
1989	The Broads, England	305	5,721	7.2
2002	Loch Lomond & the Trossachs, Scotland	1865	15,600	4
2003	Cairngorns, Scotland	4,528	17,000	1.5
2005	New Forest, England	570	34,400	Not available
2010	South Downs, England	1624	120,000	Not available

**Table 3.5: The UK’s designated National Parks in 2012**

(Data Source: UKANPA, 2012)

(\*Population and visitor data as at 2009)

Dower’s report resulted in the establishment of the *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949)*. Amongst other achievements, this Act established the National Parks Commission (NPC), the body responsible for designating UK national parks. Within a relatively short period, ten areas in England and Wales became formally designated national parks (see Table 3.5). However, the legislation contained some fundamental flaws which became increasingly apparent as post-war society grew more affluent (MacEwen & MacEwen, 1987). As noted above, the early objectives of national parks were focused on recreation and conservation, with little regard for other

dimensions of societal or economic needs. Furthermore, there was relatively little attention given to national park governance. As a consequence, subsequent reviews and legislation were passed which aimed to address these weaknesses. Given their influence in shaping the purpose and management of the national park systems which exist in the UK today, the main legislative developments are considered below to provide regulatory context to discussions.

- **Countryside Act 1968**

Under this Act, the NPC became the Countryside Commission, whose mandate was widened to cover all countryside in England and Wales instead of just those in designated national parks and AONBs. The Act espoused the need for Ministers to 'have regard for the desirability of conserving the national beauty and amenity of the countryside'. Other sections of the Act however contradicted this and highlighted the need for national park authorities to give due regard to other economic functions specifically, agriculture and forestry. As a result and somewhat unsurprisingly, these prescribed duties had little practical impact and "the Act did little to remedy the flaws in the 1949 Act" (MacEwen & MacEwen, 1987: p.17).

- **Local Government Act 1972**

This Act involved the reorganisation of local government bodies. In doing so, it amended the administrative duties and functions of national parks, as originally outlined in the 1949 Act. Specifically, it devolved responsibility for planning and countryside functions from County Councils to separate national park committees (later known as national park authorities). In practice however, these committees were made up of members of local Councils and thus were only really an extension of local government, with a distinct lack of independence (Sharpley & Pearce, 2007).

- **The 'Sandford Report' 1974**

By the early 1970s, recreation in the UK had grown significantly and as a result, the countryside was experiencing significant conflict between its two primary purposes of recreation and conservation. Lord Sandford, the residing

Countryside Minister, was therefore commissioned to write a report reviewing national park policy. The report was published in 1974 and confirmed the failings of the national park system and their inability to realise their objectives. It recognised a tendency to prioritise short term benefits over long term goals and also noted the significant lack of funding available from the government (MacEwen & MacEwen, 1987). However, the most notable and long lasting impact of this report was the establishment of the 'Sandford Principle'. The Principle states that:

“Where irreconcilable conflicts exist between conservation and public enjoyment, then conservation interests should take priority.”

(UKANPA, 2012)

On the whole, the majority of conflicts can be negated through effective management. However, for the instances when this is not possible, the Sandford Principle is intended to assist national park authorities in making decisions (UKANPA, 2012). The 1995 Act (as detailed below) accepted the basis of this Principle and outlined how this could be established in practice. Consequently, it has remained an underlying principle in park planning and management to date.

- **Fit for the Future Report, 1991**

The Fit for the Future Report was written by the National Parks Review Panel and was intended to comment on the ability of the areas to meet their objectives, comment on their likely future development and assess how their purposes might be achieved going forward. As well as endorsing the findings of the Sandford Report, it also identified 176 recommendations for the advancement of the national parks (DNP, 2004). In particular, it stressed the need for tourism policies to be clearly defined within national park plans and for such policies to be drawn up in partnership with other key regional bodies (Sharpley, 2003). In addition, these policies should only encourage development and activities which directly or indirectly contribute to national park purposes. Other recommendations included the increased independence of the NPAs and

the need for national park purposes to take account of the economic and social needs of local communities (DOE, 1992). These recommendations were adopted by the government and formed the basis of the 1995 legislation, as discussed below.

- **Environment Act 1995**

The Environment Act 1995 was a key milestone for UK national parks and much of the legislation was a direct result of the 1991 Report findings and recommendations. Specifically, the Act was responsible for the designation of *independent* national park authorities. Whilst previously, they had been extensions of local government, from this date, they were to be free-standing organisations which operated in place of or alongside local Councils (Sharpley, 2003; Sharpley & Pearce, 2007). The NPAs thus became the designated planning authority for national park areas and were charged with producing management plans and other relevant policy documents. To date, these responsibilities remain relatively unchanged and by working in partnership with other local and regional bodies, they have evolved to become hybrid structures which strive to achieve both local and national interests (Sharpley & Pearce, 2007).

Concurrently, the Act also altered the statutory objectives of national parks, widening their remit and redefining their purpose to:

- “i. conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the areas; and
- li promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the areas by the public”.

(TSO, 1995: 61(1))

In striving to achieve these purposes, the Act also prescribed that bodies and persons should:

“seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park.”

(TSO, 1995: 62(11A))

This stance very much reflects the wider acknowledgement of sustainable development principles. Whilst the specific regard for economic and social objectives heightens the awareness of these two elements, there is still a lack of equality amongst the 'pillars of sustainable development'. In essence, the environment remains prioritised. Indeed, the adoption of the Sandford Principle means that conservation is ranked above recreational opportunities which in turn, take precedence over economic and social development (Sharpley & Pearce, 2008). Yet despite this, the progress of this Act should not be underplayed as essentially, it represents a major milestone in the adoption of sustainable development principles within national park legislation.

It is worth noting at this stage, that the above legislations were primarily aimed at national parks in England and Wales only. Indeed, despite early proposals to designate national parks in Scotland (Sheail, 1975), the first park was not established until 2002 as a result of the *National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000*. This is somewhat surprising considering the area's vast natural scenery and expanses of open countryside. Barker & Stockdale (2008) suggest there were two reasons for this delay. Firstly, Scotland's landscape predominately consisted of low-grade agricultural land and therefore protection from intensive activities was not considered a priority. Secondly, the swathes of natural scenery in the highland regions were initially considered unsuitable as a national park because of their distance from major cities and domestic visitors. Thus, the notion lacked political support and progress was slow until the 1990s. In 2000, the Act was finally passed and 2002 saw the first two national parks officially designated in Scotland. However, unlike their English and Welsh contemporaries, they did not:

“evolve out of the pursuit of a dominant conservation and recreation ethic ... [but were] established with a view to combining environmental management within local rural development”

(Barker & Stockdale, 2008: p.181)

They were thus able to learn from the legislative changes which impacted preceding national parks in other areas of the UK. From the outset, the principles of sustainable

development were incorporated into Scottish national park foundations, as illustrated in their statutory purpose:

- “(a) To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- (b) to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
- (c) to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public; and
- (d) to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area’s communities.”

(TSO, 2000: 1)

Yet despite these advancements and the perceived holistic stance these objectives purvey, the Act still honours the Sandford Principle, highlighting the dominance of conservation aims should irreconcilable differences occur between objectives. Thus, whilst there is an improved commitment to sustainable development, there is still evidence of the earlier “ideological position held by English and Welsh national parks” (Barker & Stockdale, 2008: p.187).

Overall, the legislative developments of the last 60 years have seen the remit of UK national parks widen, shifting their focus away from pure conservationism towards sustainable development principles. Governance structures have been put in place to facilitate effective management and national park authorities have been charged with a remit to produce focused and forward looking policies and plans for the areas. In addition, the Sandford Principle has been adopted which provides key stakeholders with guidance on how to manage conflicting issues when they arise. Thus, whilst the priorities of individual national parks within the UK will vary according to context, they share a common overall structure and purpose which is focused on the achievement of the sustainable development agenda.

### **3.4 National Parks: A series of models**

The previous section highlighted the vast variability of parks around the world. It is not surprising therefore that conflicts over what exactly constitutes a national park have

plagued the concept since its beginning. To date, there is no one universal definition applied worldwide. Although it was an 'American invention', the US did not impose any restrictions on the use of the term leaving countries free to interpret and use the name however they wished (Hall & Frost, 2009a). As the national park concept spread, its meaning evolved. Yellowstone was used for inspiration and guidance but on the whole, national governing bodies chose not to duplicate the model, but adapt the concept to suit their own purpose and social, political and economic conditions (Frost & Hall, 2009b). This resulted in the designation of national parks all around the world that had significantly different sizes, locations, purposes and management objectives (Hall & Frost, 2009a).

Many of the world's national parks are defined as protected areas and can be classified according the IUCN's *Protected Area Management Categories*. However, despite the IUCN publishing an array of guidance on the application of this framework, many people still fail to recognise the differences between the different types of protected areas. The system is internationally recognised but, on the whole, national governments are afforded the freedom to interpret and use it as they see fit. Whilst the IUCN provided a definition for national parks under their Protected Area Management Category II classification, it is more conceptual than regulatory and thus, countries are under no obligation to adhere to it in the same manner as other protected areas such as World Heritage Sites (Hall & Frost, 2009a). Indeed, national governing bodies therefore determine their own legal definitions of 'national parks' and apply the concept to their unique social, physical, political and economic environments. Consequently, as discussed in Section 3.2, many 'national parks' actually fall within different IUCN categories (Hall & Frost, 2009b). A prime example is the UK national park model. The IUCN's definition of a Category II: National Park states that it should be a "natural or near-natural area set aside" for ecological protection which also provides opportunities for scientific, education and tourism and recreation purposes (IUCN, 2008). The UK parks however are neither 'natural' areas nor set aside land. Indeed, as discussed in Section 3.3.4, they are generally considered to be "cultural landscapes that have been **materially altered** by human occupation" (Hall & Frost, 2009a: p.6 – emphasis added). For this reason, they are actually classified under the IUCN's Category V: Protected Landscapes and defined as areas "where the interaction

of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value” (IUCN, 2008: p.20)

Even setting aside the IUCN definition, some critics assert that it is both misleading and inappropriate for the UK system to adopt the term ‘national park’ as, in a literal sense, they are neither ‘national’ nor ‘parks’ (Sharpley, 2003; 2009b). Firstly, the majority of the land incorporated into the national parks is privately owned. Their ‘national’ status is therefore related to their perceived importance to the nation rather than their ownership by the state. This criticism is not restricted to the UK system however as there are various examples of national parks all across Europe which contain privately owned land (Hall & Frost, 2009a). Secondly, the notion of a ‘park’ suggests an enclosed area set aside for a specific purpose, i.e. recreation. Many of the UK’s parks do not have demarcated boundaries and are merely areas of open countryside in which people live and work (Sharpley, 2003). Visitors can therefore enter the ‘boundaries’ of the park without even realising they are doing so, which can create significant issues and implications for park managers.

Whether an area can be classified as a national park either literally or by the IUCN’s definition is somewhat inconsequential as ultimately, it is the national governing body and stakeholders that determine the name and purpose of their protected area. In many countries, the use of the term ‘National Park’ continues to prevail for various types of protected land. Indeed, the concept is often used as a “‘catch-all’ by members of the public to refer to protected areas of national environmental and cultural significance” (Hall & Frost, 2009b: p.301). Mose & Wixlbaumer (2007: p.5) suggest that this is in part due to the outstanding image of national parks as a ‘premium category of protected areas’. The positive connotations associated with the national park brand provide a key marketing opportunity which can be used as a driving force for rural development. Indeed, in many countries, including the UK, national parks are actively promoted as tourism attractions and their frequent inclusion in regional and area marketing material has helped to develop a strong brand identity (Reinius & Fredman, 2007). It is suggested that this national park designation has resulted in increased visitor numbers as well as a shift in visitor behaviour, activity participation and attitudinal changes (Fredman et al, 2007). Thus, if protected areas managers were to

adopt another name that is less commonly known, it could either lead to confusion amongst potential visitors or denote low levels of resource significance or poor tourism infrastructure (Eagles, 2001).

Given that many of the world's national parks 'fit' into the IUCN's various management categories, it would perhaps be more accurate to refer to them as protected areas instead of national parks. However, Hall & Frost (2009a: p.15) suggest that this would "jettison the cultural heritage of the term 'national parks'". If a national government has chosen to call an area a 'national park', whether or not it falls within the IUCN's definition or follows a previous national park model, there is reasoning and often significance behind their choice and this should not be disregarded. Indeed, Hall & Frost (2009b) suggest that the understanding of the national park concept is just as embedded in local and national culture as much as it is in the IUCN definition or its American roots. Trying to ascertain one overriding definition that fits all national parks is therefore not only superfluous but ultimately, could have negative consequences for parks trying to impose a system that is simply unsuitable for their specific area. As the historical context of the concept has shown (in Section 3.3), there is no one overriding national park model. It is common however to assume that there is and often, our perceptions of that one 'correct model' are drawn from the national park systems in our own countries (Hall & Frost, 2009a). However, this is not the case. As different nations embraced the concept, numerous variables have developed including ecosystems, protection focus (e.g. landforms, wildlife, and cultural heritage), visitor focus and infrastructure and land ownership (Frost & Hall, 2009b). Given that these variations reflect the unique local social, physical, political and economic environments, it is practical to assume that they cannot be readily duplicated in other locations. National parks should therefore not be seen as a single universal model but as a series of models with some similarities but often, an array of differences (Hall & Frost, 2009a). With this in mind, when selecting the national parks for inclusion in this research, it was not necessary for them to adhere to a specific definition as long as they were nationally recognised parks. Further details regarding the selection of cases can be found within section 4 of chapter 5 of this research.

### 3.5 Recreation and tourism in national parks

A large amount of national park literature focuses on ecological studies rather than the management of human usage (Butler, 2000). The nature of the relationship between national parks and tourism has therefore received relatively little attention. This is somewhat surprising given its significant role in the establishment and management of the majority of national parks. A significant amount of literature in this area uses the word 'tourism' to encapsulate both 'recreation' and 'tourism' (international and domestic) despite there being a number of differences between the concepts (as illustrated in Table 3.6). This is primarily because recreationists and tourists often engage in the same activities and it is therefore difficult to distinguish between the different uses of national parks (Butler & Boyd, 2000). Consequently, this approach has also been adopted in this research, and going forward, unless specifically stated, the term 'tourism' is used to describe all visitors to national parks, regardless of their origin, length of stay or purpose. It is acknowledged that this may be somewhat inaccurate and result in generalisations, but given that the impacts of recreationists and tourists are normally very similar, they often result in the same planning and management issues and implications and do not require individual investigation (ibid).

TERM	DEFINITION
Recreation	<b>“non-vacation</b> visitation for <b>pleasure</b> , often of a <b>domestic nature</b> , i.e. not travelling beyond the boundaries of one’s own country” (Butler & Boyd, 2000: p.5 – emphasis added)
Tourism	Involves “a person <b>travelling to and staying</b> in a place away from their usual environment for <b>more than a night</b> but less than one year for <b>leisure, business and other purposes</b> ” (Lumsdon, 1997: p.6 – emphasis added)  Tourism can be further segmented into domestic tourism and international tourism, whereby the former is concerned with people “visiting destinations within their own country’s boundaries” and the latter, concerns people “visiting destinations outside of their country’s boundaries”. (Cooper et al, 2005: p.792)

**Table 3.6: Proposed definitions highlighting the difference between recreation and tourism.**

From their beginnings, national parks saw tourism as a “valid and appropriate use” and were keen to develop tourism facilities and infrastructure as a valuable source of revenue (Butler & Boyd, 2000: p.5). The early national parks received relatively few visitors, primarily because of their location away from urban centres and the primary access routes being railways (as discussed in greater detail in Section 3.3.1). As the national park concept spread, they also became a lot more accessible due to developed infrastructure and the advent of mass car ownership *inter alia* (Hall & Lew, 2009). Post World War II, there has been a significant rise in the volume of tourists to national parks, primarily due to the following factors:

- **Changes in demographics:**

Following dramatic improvements in healthcare, there has been a significant shift in the population structure. Increasingly, people are living longer and maintaining healthier, active lifestyles well into their retirement. In developed countries, there has also been an increase in the number of people taking early retirement, entering older age with significant savings and wanting to travel to new places (IUCN, 2003). This has had a significant impact on national parks. Senior citizens are increasingly interested in outdoor activities such as walking, nature study, picnicking and wildlife observation. National parks are well suited to such forms of tourism and have therefore experienced a rise in visitor numbers in this demographic (Eagles & McCool, 2000). This has provided both an opportunity and a challenge for park managers. Given their disposable income, there is often an increased demand for higher levels of interpretation and guide services. However, people over the age of 45 are a lot less inclined to camp and therefore the demand for comfortable hotels and accommodation has risen (Eagles et al, 2002).

- **Changes in leisure patterns**

Although changes have been observed both in the amount of leisure time available and how people choose to use it, this trend is often contradictory and varies around the world. Whilst some people have observed an increase in leisure time due to a shorter working week, increased incomes, early retirements and longer life spans, others, particularly those working in white-

collar jobs with high workloads have actually experienced the opposite (Schor, 1993). Similarly, the use of leisure time also varies. In America, there has been a tendency to shift away from 2-3 week holidays in distant countries towards more frequent, shorter holidays in destinations closer to home. However, in Europe, leisure time is more likely to involve longer holiday periods due to greater disposable incomes. This has therefore had a significant impact on worldwide park visitation (Eagles et al, 2002).

- **Growth in demand for low impact tourism**

People are increasingly concerned with social and environmental issues around the world. This has led to changes in lifestyles and people making more environmentally and socially conscious purchasing decisions. This trend has also transcended across to holiday choice as people are increasingly moving from consumptive tourism towards low impact activities. Furthermore, improved literacy levels, particularly in developing countries, has led to a greater demand for life enriching experiences and travel involving learning including wildlife viewing, cultural visits and nature appreciation (Eagles et al, 2002). This has therefore resulted in an increase in demand for nature-based tourism and ecotourism, both of which are synonymous with national parks (Eagles, 2001).

- **Technological advancements and inventions**

Tourism has been dramatically influenced by the internet. It has revolutionised consumer purchasing behaviour and provides tourists with instant access to a huge web of information regarding prospective destinations (Beirne & Curry, 1999). National parks increasingly use the internet to advertise themselves as a destination and share up to date information on tourism facilities, protected area policies and ongoing conservation projects. The internet therefore helps to create an international presence for national parks and this has significantly influenced global park visitation (Eagles et al, 2002). Advancements in transportation and particularly the airline industry have made international travel both easier and cheaper than ever before (Hall & Lew, 2009). Previously exotic and 'unreachable' destinations are now accessible to all (Reid, 2003) and

people are increasingly seeking untouched, natural areas, making national parks a lure for visitors (Eagles et al, 2002).

The significant rise in the volume of tourism has had a number of both positive and negative impacts on national parks' socio-cultural and ecological environments (Hall & Lew, 2009). Of particular significance is the complex relationship between tourism and the environment. Whilst tourism is required for its potential economic benefits, its reliance on and consumption of natural resources means that it is often associated with environmental degradation. Park managers therefore often experience difficulty in effectively managing their competing mandates of tourism development and environmental conservation (McCool, 2009).

### **3.6 Balancing conflicting objectives: environmental conservation & tourism**

The majority of national park models have two key elements at their core: 1. environmental conservation and 2. access for public recreation and tourism (Hall & Frost, 2009b). Consequently, these objectives both have fundamental roles within park planning and management. Budowski (1976) suggests however, that the relationship between environmental conservation and tourism can be viewed in three ways:

1. **Conflict:** Tourism and conservation come into conflict when the impacts of tourism result in negative environmental impacts such as pollution and resource degradation. This often leads conservationists to protest against tourism development.
2. **Co-existence:** The tourism and conservation industries have very little contact with each other and pursue their own objectives. This can be due to their limited development, ignorance of each other's fields or administrative barriers. However, given the increasing presence of tourism, this state of coexistence is often quickly followed by conflict or symbiosis.
3. **Symbiosis:** Tourism and conservation are managed so that they derive mutual benefits from each other. The natural environment is protected in its original state whilst tourists derive physical, educational, cultural or aesthetic benefits

from the natural resources. Tourism also presents a number of economic benefits for the local communities and for conservation use.

Although there are examples of all three relationships in national parks and protected areas around the world, the overriding model is one of conflict, primarily due to the increasing volume of tourism and the depletion of natural, untouched areas (Budowski, 1976; Sharpley, 2003). Dearden (2000) suggests this conflict is because of the inherent incompatibility of the objectives: if environmental preservation is sought, how can tourism be promoted given that it is often a consumptive industry? Tourism is reliant on the very environment in which it exists. As it has become more widespread within national parks, there have been significant concerns regarding the somewhat inevitable negative environmental impacts of visitation (Hall & Lew, 2009). Largely, tourism has become associated with increased pollution, degradation of ecosystems and deterioration of cultural landscapes (Bushell & McCool, 2007). However, perhaps more significantly, it has also resulted in the development of previously natural areas to provide tourist facilities such as hotels, restaurants, roads and viewing points *inter alia* (Budowski, 1976). One of the primary attractions of many national parks is their natural, untouched state. By developing these areas, the size and quality of the natural area is decreasing and thus, purely by their presence and usage, visitors are ultimately destroying the very environment they wish to see and enjoy.

It is not surprising therefore that some conservationists have called for the eradication of tourism within national parks completely. However, to do this would not only “betray one of the founding principles of the park system” but would also be counterproductive (Butler, 2000: p.334). Many national parks receive significant public and political support due to their tourism function and, more specifically, the related economic benefits. Tourism revenues often far exceed government contributions for the park maintenance and management and therefore, they can contribute significantly to the economic development of the area. Furthermore, a proportion of the revenues can be utilised for environmental protection and contribute to conservation projects (Bushell, 2003). Aside from the economic benefits, tourism can also directly benefit conservation by helping to build awareness and fostering support for the protection of the physical environment and cultural heritage in the park (Bushell & McCool, 2007).

However, despite conservation projects aimed at improving or sustaining the natural environment, many national parks are no longer considered to be 'pristine wilderness' and their value is derived primarily from tourism. To strip this function from the landscape would therefore degrade the area and could result in substantially weakened political and public support as well as a decline in associated economic benefits (Butler, 2000).

The relationship between tourism and conservation is clearly very complex. If national parks are to continue to be multifunctional, it is imperative that they find a way to balance the competing objectives (Haukeland, 2011; McCool 2009). This is extremely challenging for stakeholders, especially as the increasing number of tourists heightens and diversifies the range of pressures on parks (Butler & Boyd, 2000). Going forward, it is anticipated that visitor numbers will expand even further, as many of the trends which have led to the current levels of tourism (as outlined in Section 3.5) look set to continue (Butler, 2000). However, Bushell (2003) suggests that the negative impacts of tourism are not necessarily attributable to visitor numbers but rather inadequate planning and management. In many national parks, tourism and conservation are managed by different organisations and involve a multitude of stakeholders, all with their own goals, priorities and social and economic dependencies (McCool, 2009). This can lead to poor information flow, discrepancies in management strategies and thus, make it difficult to effectively manage tourism impacts (Jamal & Stronza, 2009). If tourism and conservation are both to be sustained in the long-term, they need to be managed alongside each other and strive for a state of symbiosis (Budowski, 1976; EUROPARC, 2001). One means of doing this is by adopting the principles of sustainable development as a response to the issues and challenges tourism brings to national parks (Boyd, 2000). Not only can it provide direction for park developers but it also has significant potential as a management tool for those faced with multiple park mandates. Park managers need to use trade-offs to balance their competing objectives and this very notion is at the heart of the sustainable development concept (as discussed in more detail in Chapter 2). To ensure that tourism development does not conflict with conservation goals, it is essential that resource intensive, high impact tourism enterprises are adapted so that they better align with sustainable development principles (Butler, 2000) and:

“generate much needed income for conservation world for the protection of biodiversity, ecosystem integrity and cultural heritage...contribute to the quality of life of local communities; protect and respect sacred sites; and acknowledge traditional knowledge...and provide opportunities for people to advance themselves economically.” (Bushell & McCool, 2007: p.12)

Sustainable tourism development adopts a holistic approach by ensuring that park managers consult and work with a range of stakeholders to assess and understand the implications of tourism development and its potential positive and negative impacts. In theory, this should enable tourism, along with the other relevant industries (including logging, mining and agriculture) to be planned, developed and managed at a level that is both appropriate and sensitive to the national park environment (Boyd, 2000). Ways in which this is achieved in practice will be considered in greater depth in Chapter 4.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

Since the national park concept was first applied to the Yellowstone area in 1872, it has spread rapidly around the world and been used by national governments to describe protected areas of significantly different locations, sizes, purposes and management objectives. Consequently, there has been considerable debate over what exactly constitutes a national park. Despite the IUCN providing a definition within their Protected Area Management Categories, it is more conceptual than regulatory and thus, national governments are free to interpret and use it however they see fit (Hall & Frost, 2009a). National parks have a strong brand identity and the concept is often used by the public to refer to protected areas of varying cultural and environmental significance (Hall & Frost, 2009b; Reinius & Fredman, 2007). It is not surprising that national bodies and stakeholders responsible for naming and defining their protected areas choose to use the national park label.

The failure to identify a universal definition of national parks is not necessarily problematic. The understanding of national park concept is just as embedded in local and cultural values as it is in the IUCN definition and its American roots (Hall & Frost,

2009b). As Section 3.3 illustrated, as different nations embraced the concept, they developed numerous variables to suit their own social, political and economic environments. However, what is suitable for one area is not necessarily suitable for another. National parks should therefore not be seen as a single universal model but rather a series of models with some similarities but an array of differences (Hall & Frost, 2009a).

Despite their differences, many national parks retain two fundamental objectives: environmental conservation and tourism. Recent years have seen the volume of park tourism increase dramatically due in part to technological advancements, changes in people's leisure time, rising concerns for social and environmental issues and heightened demand for low impact tourism (Eagles & McCool, 2000; Eagles et al, 2002). Whilst this increased tourism has provided economic benefits, it is also associated with environmental degradation, and the over-use of natural resources (McCool, 2009). This has therefore brought the two objectives of national parks into increasing conflict, presenting a key challenge for park managers and planners.

Bushell (2003) however, suggests that the negative impacts associated with tourism are not attributable to the volume of tourists *per se* but rather inadequacies in park planning and management. At present, many national parks have separate organisations responsible for the management of conservation and tourism. However, if the two are to be sustained in the long term and parks are to remain multifunctional, they need to be managed alongside each other (EUROPARC, 2001). One means of doing this is by adopting sustainable development principles within planning and management functions, with specific awareness of the need for trade-offs in order to balance competing objectives. Sustainable tourism development ensures that park managers and stakeholders work together to assess and understand the impacts and implications of tourism development so that it can be planned, developed and managed at a level that is sensitive to the national park environment (Boyd, 2000). The following chapter moves on to assess how this is achieved in practice.

## Chapter 4

### **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NATIONAL PARKS**

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#### **4.1 Introduction**

The preceding two chapters have introduced both the context and fundamental concepts that underpin this research: sustainable tourism development and national parks. This chapter combines these two theoretical frameworks by examining the application of sustainable tourism development principles within planning and management in national parks. Inskeep (1991) states that:

“the sustainable development approach can be applied to any scale of tourism development....and that sustainability depends on how well the *planning* is formulated relative to the *specific characteristics* of an area’s environment, economy and society and on the effectiveness of *plan implementation* and *continuous management* of tourism.”

(Inskeep, 1991: p.xviii – *emphasis added*)

This quote highlights two very pertinent issues: 1. that the approach must be moulded around the social, economic and environmental characteristics of each destination and; 2. that there is an intrinsic relationship between tourism planning and management and thus, the effectiveness of one is ultimately dependent on the other. In accepting this premise, this chapter begins with section 4.2 analysing the key tourism impacts within national parks. It should be noted however, that this discussion is by no means exhaustive and nor do all of the issues highlighted affect *every* national park area. This section merely serves to provide an evaluation of the most common and prevalent issues found within national park case studies in existing tourism academia.

To ensure that tourism activities do not develop haphazardly and lead to extensive detrimental impacts, destinations require appropriate planning and management (Mason, 2003). The remaining sections in the chapter evaluate existing theories on tourism planning and management, and highlight the importance of adopting an

integrated approach whereby the two processes feed into each other. However, in national park contexts, tourism planning and management is particularly complex as the highly sensitive natural resource base is also their primary tourism product. The dual remit of national parks is to conserve the natural environment and increase recreational access however this often creates an “inevitable tension” particularly amongst disparate stakeholder groups (Hall & Lew, 2009; Vaske et al, 2000). The principles of sustainable tourism development therefore provide a framework around which appropriate and sensitive planning and management processes can be developed. However, it should be noted that there is no one distinctive ‘sustainable tourism development approach’ and instead, operationalising the concept often involves its principles being embedded into wider planning and management strategies, e.g. through stakeholder engagement, the formation of tourism strategies, the control of visitor numbers, adapting the resource base, educating visitors, influencing visitor behaviour and monitoring processes.

## **4.2 Tourism Impacts**

Tourism, in any context, is not a ‘smokeless’ industry. Europarc (2001) suggested that if national parks were not managed effectively, they were in danger of being ‘loved to death’. Without careful planning and management, the industry can develop haphazardly resulting in inefficiencies and malfunctions (Gunn, 1988; Mason, 2003). Tourism is sometimes therefore accused of ‘carrying the seeds of its own destruction’ as visitor use can potentially destroy the very attraction they set out to see (McCool & Moisey, 2008). This is particularly significant within national parks which are highly resource sensitive destinations (Eagles & McCool, 2000). Thus, to minimise any negative impacts and maximise potential opportunities in a timely manner, tourism needs to be effectively planned and managed (Sharpley, 2009a).

At a broad level, planning is defined as:

“a process that involves selecting a desirable future out of a range of plausible alternatives, and implementing strategies and actions that will achieve a desired outcome. Thus, by definition, planning moves us from the present to the future.”  
(Eagles et al, 2002: p.13)

Management is closely linked to planning, and predominantly focuses on the implementation and monitoring of on-going activities required to meet this 'desired outcome'. In relation to tourism, the effectiveness of these processes are influenced by the unique characteristics of a destination and thus, can only be realised following an evaluation of the current issues and impacts which need addressing. Planners and stakeholders need to be aware of developments in the external environment so they can be reactive to changes outside of their control and exploit opportunities where possible. However, more importantly, they also need to analyse their internal environment so they can be proactive in minimising negative impacts and maximising positive impacts associated with tourism development (Hall, 2008; Inskip, 1991; Mason, 2003). Thus, prior to discussions surrounding key planning and management considerations, this chapter will begin by outlining some of the significant tourism impacts associated with national parks.

There are, inevitably, some impacts which are common to tourism development as a whole and these generic issues are well documented in an array of tourism academia. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to give a full consideration to all tourism impacts. Instead, a large number of national park case studies have been carefully reviewed and the following sub-sections attempt to provide a summary of the key impacts which commonly affect national park systems. The impacts are divided into three broad groupings: social, economic and environmental. Whilst it is conventional within tourism literature to present impacts in this manner, the main reason for this approach here is because these categories form the three pillars of sustainable development and thus highlight the relationship between the concepts. It should be noted however, that such categorisation is a crude and somewhat simplistic view of the impacts. In reality, many are multi-dimensional and actually encompass a combination of economic, social and environmental impacts affecting different stakeholders in different ways. Furthermore, whether they are perceived to be 'negative' or 'positive' depends entirely upon the perspectives of the individuals involved (Brown, 1998; Mason, 2003). Despite the categorisation imposed on the impacts, the following sub-sections do attempt to provide a holistic discussion and where relevant, explicit reference is made to the position of the observer in order to highlight the different stances of key stakeholders.

#### **4.2.1 Environmental impacts**

Tourism within national parks has a positive impact on the environment in two distinct ways: firstly, it heightens appreciation for the natural environment and increases the awareness of the need for conservation and (Bushell, 2003); secondly, visitor income also contributes to the funding of conservation projects (Goodwin, 2002; Lilieholm & Romney, 2000). These benefits are directly related, as, it is through the first that the second largely results. This is particularly significant in the UK national parks, whose primary source of funding is a government grant. Recent years have seen significant reductions in the grant funding available whilst the national parks continue to experience increased visitor numbers and thus require more money to ensure their conservation (Bushell & McCool, 2007). Direct visitor contributions have therefore been seen as an alternative source of income to meet the funding requirements for new conservation projects as well as on-going maintenance (Stevens, 2002). However, as Bushell (2003) states, environmental awareness and the importance of supporting nature conservation is not something which can be learned in a classroom. Visitors are often more motivated to contribute to the protection of natural areas when they are able to physically see a benefit or tangible return. National parks and other protected areas therefore provide a forum through which people can experience the outdoors and develop an understanding of its value in wider society. The issues relating to funding and tourism income will be considered in greater detail in section 4.2.3 which considers economic impacts.

However, whilst growing visitor numbers can help develop new conservation schemes and contribute to the on-going maintenance of the environment, inevitably, they also result in various detrimental impacts. Pollution within national parks takes many guises but, regardless of its form, it is undoubtedly perceived by all stakeholder groups to be a negative by-product of the tourism industry. Of particular significance in relation to nature-based tourism is trampling and erosion (Cahill et al, 2008; Leung & Marion, 1999). Often associated with a sustained period of use and growing visitor numbers to specific areas, this is common on areas of land with no officially designated footpaths. People tend to forge their way along informal trails and future visitors follow the same tracks. In time, the trails get muddy and thus, grow wider. This results in erosion and the compaction of top soil leading to damaged flora and disturbances to fauna (Buckley

& Pannell, 1990). Such an example is the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park which has experienced extensive erosion to its coastal path due to the number of walkers, climbers and fisherman using it for access (PCNPA, 2012).

However, trampling and erosion are largely considered to be unintentional consequences of increased visitation as, for the most part at least, people do not purposely set out to harm the environment. For example, some erosion is merely as a result of changes in leisure pursuits, as more people seek active lifestyles and thus undertake activities which inevitably impact the environment, for example, hiking, mountain biking or horse riding. However, there are numerous examples of issues which are the direct result of the irresponsible behaviour of visitors. These include littering, excessive noise, damage to verges from parked vehicles, debris from illicit camping and open fires and disturbances to wildlife (Buckley & Pannell, 1990; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996; Lillieholm & Romney, 2000).

#### **4.2.2 Social impacts**

Research analysing the social impacts of tourism primarily focuses on the negative effect tourism development has on the local host community. Common impacts noted include traffic congestion, overcrowding, hostilities between visitors and hosts, increased cost of living and loss of culture (Andereck et al, 2005; Hall & Lew, 2009). Whilst these issues are all relevant to national parks, one of the most notable social issues is the increased demand for second homes and holiday home ownership. Sharpley (2004) provided a good analysis of this issue in relation to the Lake District in the UK however, his observations also hold true for other national parks throughout the UK. A large number of national park residents are former visitors who have either retired to the area or invested in properties as a second home or to rent out as a holiday let. Given the tight restrictions on building new properties in national parks, the consequent growing demand for properties has resulted in heavily inflated prices. This means that locally born and bred residents who have lower incomes are priced out of the market, resulting in reduced home ownership and an increased reliance on rented accommodation. This, in turn, can result in a loss of community as some

residents choose to migrate to new areas where they are able to afford housing and can develop a more affordable lifestyle.

Alongside these detrimental impacts, tourism can also help to preserve cultural heritage, with revenues used to directly restore significant areas of historical, archeological and architectural significance (Eagles et al., 2002; Hall & Lew, 2009). Furthermore, as the levels of tourism increase, so do the requirements for improved facilities and services to support basic functions (such as water, energy and waste management) and recreational opportunities (such as accommodation, transportation and attractions) (Eagles & McCool, 2000). Whilst these are often primarily geared towards improving visitor experiences, they also benefit local communities and can help protect other valuable rural services which may otherwise have been discontinued (Sharpley, 2003). Examples include the provision of public transportation, upkeep of village shops and the development and maintenance of cycle ways and footpaths.

The protection of rural resources and facilities are often well marketed by tourism agents and this can have two opposing impacts on communities: on the one hand, it can lead to increased pride in the local area whereby residents are receptive and welcoming towards visitors. On the other hand, it creates hostilities between resident and visitors as the host community becomes resentful of tourism and its associated impacts. It has been suggested that many communities demonstrate a mixture of opinions amongst residents and that, for the most part, the viewpoint of individuals can be attributed to their respective levels of involvement in tourism planning management (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Wall & Mathieson, 2005). However, this perception does not always hold true. For example, some farmers who have operational rights of way across their land may become resentful of tourists who do not display appropriate behaviour, e.g. by leaving gates open or dropping litter, as such behaviour may have detrimental impacts on their animals. However, the same farmers are likely to also have involvement in the local tourism industry through the provision of goods or services. This example illustrates the complex relationship that often exists between tourists and host communities. This relationship therefore requires appropriate and considerate planning and management to minimise any negative social impacts as the long-term

development of sustainable destinations “is highly dependent on the goodwill and cooperation of host communities” (Cole, 2006: p.630).

### **4.2.3 Economic impacts**

One of the primary reasons for encouraging tourism in an area is to benefit economically: through monetary income, economic stimulation and employment opportunities *inter alia* (Hall & Lew, 2009). The UK Association of National Park Authorities (UKANPA) highlights all of these benefits on their website (UKANPA, 2012) and indeed, rural tourism is a fundamental source of income for many local communities with few other options (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Mitchell & Hall, 2005; VisitEngland, 2010). However, such economic benefits have led many rural economies to become reliant on the industry as the dominant source of income and employment. This can be risky and lead to problems when external issues cause a breakdown in the tourism system. Within UK national parks, this is best illustrated by the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001. Vast swathes of countryside were closed overnight to the public and devastating effects were felt by communities and economies all over the country. Rural tourism suffered losses estimated to be in the region of £5 billion due to the curtailment of outdoor activities and the complete closure of some areas of countryside including, Dartmoor National Park (Morris, 2004; Rodway-Dyer & Shaw, 2005). With tourism forming such a central role in the rural economy, unsurprisingly, other related businesses such as restaurants and shops, who were dependent on visitors, also felt the effects and a large number faced uncertain futures and even bankruptcy (Hayward, 2001; Sharpley & Craven, 2001).

The impacts of foot-and-mouth highlighted the over-reliance of the rural economy on tourism, however, in the wake of the crisis, there appears to have been little movement away from this dependency. Although some rural enterprises have opted to diversify their operations (e.g. by developing local produce, crafts and farm shops), these have largely remained within the realms of tourism and thus, are still reliant on visitor income (Morris, 2004). The primary reason for this being that the tight restrictions levied on residents and businesses by the legislation governing the national park system offer few suitable alternatives. However, despite such restrictions, tourism can also act

as a stimulant to the local economy by encouraging the development of complementary industries and reducing economic leakage. This is particularly evident within the UK, where the national park authorities actively promote the use of local materials, produce and labour, thus illustrating the support for the development of supplementary products and services (UKANPA, 2012).

Whilst tourism continues to be encouraged for its perceived economic advantages, like many other destinations, such benefits are often dimmed by their nature. For example, although tourism provides employment opportunities, these are often seasonal, part time and poorly paid (Wall & Mathieson, 2005). Furthermore, tourism income is also subject to leakages out of the national park vicinity (Eagles et al, 2002). The best example of this being 'outsiders' who live miles away from the national parks yet have purchased properties which they then rent out as holiday accommodation. This tourism income is thus leaked from the area, never benefiting the local community or environment.

The issues mentioned hitherto in this sub-section are visible to some extent in most destinations, however, there is one specific economic impact which is largely unique to protected areas: the costs incurred in the management of the national park. Some protected areas charge entry fees which provide the majority of the funds required for the upkeep of the area. UK national parks, by contrast, are Category V protected areas and are 'living landscapes'. There are no fences designating their boundaries and no gates charging visitors an entry fee. Their main source of funding is a government grant distributed by DEFRA. Recent years have seen this funding reduce considerably despite visitor numbers continuing to rise and this is having significant implications on national park planning and management. As more people use the area, more protection schemes are required to ensure it is sustained at an appropriate ecological level whilst also providing a quality visitor experience. Such conservation schemes are often expensive as they need to be done in a manner which is sensitive to the local environment, using appropriate expertise and materials (Western Morning News, 2013). Tightened budgets are therefore leading to an increased focus on the maintenance of current resources to the detriment of new, one-off conservation projects.

The reduction in government funding has meant that national parks are seeking alternative income to fund their conservation projects (Bushell & McCool, 2007). They are no longer able to rely on subsidy receipts and instead, are moving towards a 'user-pays' principle, becoming increasingly reliant on direct voluntary income from visitors (as discussed in Section 4.2.1 above). One source of income via this method is payback schemes, which enable visitors to include a discretionary charge on locally generated service bills. Such schemes

“aim to convert the visitors' emotive valuing of a destination into a financial value in a way that exploits the *'feel-good'* factor implicit in knowing that you are directly contributing to the conservation of a special place.”

(Stevens, 2002: 9.3)

The income generated is used to make a direct contribution to a conservation project in the vicinity where the donation is collected. Schemes such as this are being operated in many of the UK national parks and provide a vital source of funding. However, due to their nature, they create pressure to increase visitor numbers whilst ensuring that visitor experiences are of a sufficiently high quality that people will want to contribute. Thus, there is a danger that such schemes commoditise the national park, resulting in related adverse impacts (Bushell & McCool, 2007). Furthermore, as payback schemes are reliant on visitor numbers and their subsequent generosity, it is both an unpredictable and unreliable source of income for national parks.

### **4.3 Tourism planning**

In its broadest sense, planning is a process of decision-making which evaluates the current position, identifies a desired future position and establishes a clear direction for attaining this outcome. Tourism planning is merely the application of this process to the specifics and complexities of the tourism industry. At a practical level, tourism planning involves the consideration of the current impacts of tourism and the subsequent identification of relevant long term, medium term and short term objectives (Veal, 2002). It requires consultation with and contributions from all relevant stakeholder groups to ensure that their respective needs are addressed and where necessary, trade-offs are achieved (Gunn with Var, 2002). Furthermore, it should result

in the development of appropriate policies and strategies which outline the proposed course of action required to achieve the destination's objectives (Fennell, 1999; Mason, 2003).

Tourism planning is a well researched area within academic literature and a variety of models have been presented by theorists including, but not limited to, Getz (1986), Gunn with Var (2002), Hall (2008), Inskip (1991) Murphy (1985) and Veal (2002). The purpose of this section is not to provide a comprehensive discussion surrounding the intricacies of tourism planning but to provide a brief analysis of the evolution of tourism planning whilst highlighting the pertinent issues relevant to national parks.

As the tourism industry has developed and changed over the last century, so too have the approaches to tourism planning. In many ways, the evolution of tourism planning mirrors the changes observed in development theory, outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Early tourism planning adopted a *top-down* approach which focused on increasing tourist numbers and economic growth. Over time, tourism planning has largely shifted away from prescriptive approaches towards more appropriate, destination sensitive methods (Hall, 2008). These include land-use planning techniques which give due consideration to the spatial and capacity limitations of destinations, *bottom-up*, community approaches involving high levels of stakeholder engagement and empowerment (Gunn with Var, 2002) and, most recently, a sustainable development approach, proffering an integrated and strategic stance. However, Getz (1986) highlights that these approaches are not mutually exclusive and whilst some areas have been quick to move away from prescriptive tourism planning, other destinations still find this approach is effective in their specific context. This highlights the significant point in relation to tourism planning: the appropriateness of the planning approach adopted is entirely dependent on the unique needs and characteristics of the destination.

The issue of tourism planning is particularly complex within national parks due to their dual mandate to protect and maintain the environment and to provide recreational access. As discussed in chapter 3, this remit "creates an inevitable tension, because any use has some impact on natural features or tourist experiences" (Vaske et al, 2000:

p.203). Park planners are often faced with the challenge of achieving a trade-off between increasing visitations and conserving the natural environment (Cahill et al, 2008; Haukeland, 2011; McCool, 2009). However, seeking a balance between these responsibilities and effective impact management is further complicated by the multitude of stakeholders involved in many national park systems, who each interpret the impacts according to their unique, individual stance. Park planners therefore require value judgements when prioritising issues and determining an appropriate course of action (Hall & Lew, 2009). Thus,

“it is important in designing a planning process to adopt a procedure that is understandable, defensible, where decisions can be traced and where the value judgements inherent in protected area planning are made explicit.”

(Eagles et al, 2002: p.41)

National parks are complex systems and as visitor numbers continue to increase, so too do their respective impacts on the natural resource base. Given the centrality of this resource base to the industry itself, ad hoc planning approaches of the past are no longer appropriate (ibid). Instead, a structured and strategic approach is required to ensure the long-term survival of the natural environment, future economic returns, social benefits and visitor satisfaction (Buckley & Pannell, 1990). However, once again, different planning approaches can be observed in different contexts, a point which is highlighted in Stevens' (2002) examination of various UK national parks. The case studies he examined all had different approaches and he concluded that:

“It is clear that there are not , nor should there be, any standard prescriptions as to how best to meet the challenges of planning, managing and delivering sustainable tourism strategies in National Parks...[however] across the board, all the case studies highlight the importance of establishing a clear vision of sustainable tourism development, articulating that vision through a communication strategy and gaining commitment to achieving the vision by ownership of key stakeholders.”

(Stevens, 2002: 11.1)

Yet, despite the variations amongst national park planning strategies, a large number are increasingly consistent with the sustainable development approach outlined by Hall

(2008). In short, sustainable tourism planning involves the adoption of a holistic, integrative and strategic approach which incorporates broader sustainable development principles into specific planning processes. The prevalence of this approach is not surprising given the increasing prominence attached to the notion of sustainable development within national park mandates (as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3).

With national parks experiencing growing visitor numbers, the number of stakeholders “who expect to be at the planning table” is also increasing significantly and rapidly (McCool, 2009). As a result, park planning has become increasingly complex and ‘messy’ (Eagles & McCool, 2000). Sustainable tourism planning provides a platform from which this ‘messiness’ can be managed. In essence, the principles of sustainable tourism development need to be carefully translated into action to enable the national park to be developed in an appropriate and sensitive manner. However, rather than dictating a specific planning approach, Boyd (2000) suggests it is more suitable to embed the principles of sustainable tourism development into wider planning strategies. Paramount within this approach is the need for effective stakeholder engagement and the development of a clear tourism strategy (Hall, 2008), both of which are discussed in greater detail below.

#### **4.3.1 Stakeholder engagement**

National parks have a substantially diverse range of stakeholders, each with their own distinct culture and interests. National park management and governance is thus, increasingly fragmented. At a practical level, this presents a challenge which should not be underestimated as, essentially:

“Tourism planning and management take place in the real world, where there are different individuals and groups, different value systems, varying and often conflicting interests and the processes of negotiation, coercion, compromise and choice all conspire to ensure that these activities are not necessarily rational or straightforward.” (Mason, 2003: p.80)

As previously stated, these differences can lead to conflicts when prioritising objectives and determining the level of development which is appropriate for the destination. Tourism planning is therefore considered to be more effective when it encompasses different stakeholders' interests and issues (Bramwell & Lane, 2000b). Tourism planning theory has therefore seen a general shift away from top down approaches, to more integrated, participative methods (Hall, 2008; Wray, 2011). Specifically, collaboration has been widely advocated as a means of engaging multiple stakeholders and addressing problem areas. It is also fundamental in promoting a 'sense of ownership' over management plans and policies, which encourages stakeholders to take greater responsibility for the goals outlined therein and actively strive for their realisation (Bramwell & Lane, 2000a; Eagles et al, 2002; Jamal & Stronza, 2009; Thomas et al, 2003).

Collaboration can be described as "a process of joint decision making among stakeholders of a problem domain about the future of that domain" (Gray, 1989: p.227). It assumes that all stakeholders are interdependent, that they have joint ownership over decisions and that they have a collective responsibility for the direction of the project (Vernon et al, 2005). This may involve the development of a collaborative partnership, with regular, cross sectoral interactions over a period of time (McCool, 2009; Wilson et al, 2009). Alternatively, less formal structures may involve stakeholders working together in a network or on an ad hoc project by project basis. In either case, collaboration enables expertise and resources to be pooled so that together, stakeholders can achieve greater efficiencies than they could individually (Wray, 2011). However, whilst in theory this approach is heavily advocated, in practice, it is incredibly challenging. The initial difficulty is often ensuring that all relevant stakeholders have been identified, particularly given the ever-changing nature of the park system and the influence of both internal and external organisations and individuals. Furthermore, even when relevant stakeholders have been identified, it is difficult to obtain consensus due to the presence of competing interests. However, by encouraging disparate stakeholders to participate in planning processes, this can at least ensure that all interests and perspectives are acknowledged and heard. Trade off processes can then be engaged in and through dialogue and negotiation, acceptable

levels of tourism development can be determined and outlined in policies and plans (Bramwell & Lane, 2000a; Haukeland, 2011).

The relative success of collaborative processes depends on the extent to which overall aims and objectives are understood. The ultimate remit of the national parks in the UK are outlined under statute and, as is the case in the UK, often, a single national park authority has overall responsibility for facilitating and coordinating planning and management (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1999; Sharpley & Pearce, 2007). Thus, whilst stakeholders can help to devise the management plan and more detailed strategies, ultimately, all actions and development should be concerned with the achievement of the national park's broader remit (Farrell, & Marion, 2002). The process of collaborative working is therefore essentially, an exercise in communication. Stakeholders need to understand the overall aims of the park and their role in helping to achieve these. However, they also need to communicate their own requirements and priorities so that they are given due consideration within formal policies and planning and to ensure other stakeholders understand their perspectives (Byrd, 2007). This can ease conflicts and also help develop mutual understanding of priorities and concepts; an issue which presents a barrier to the achievement of sustainable tourism development (Jamal & Stronza, 2009).

Collaboration can help to create more integrated tourism planning by encouraging greater interactions between different sectors both within and around the national park (Bramwell & Lane, 2000b). This ensures that tourism is not developed in isolation, but is considered in relation to the other sectors and industries that exist in the area, as well as in conjunction with regional and national development plans (Timothy, 1998). However, the localised level is equally important and a significant amount of research into stakeholder engagement places community participation at the centre of inclusive planning strategies (Cole, 2006; Goodwin, 2002; Mannigel, 2008; Tosun, 2000). This is particularly important given that tourism is a situated service industry and the host communities have direct interaction with visitors and thus, have the potential to influence visitor experiences. If communities are dissatisfied, they can be hostile to visitors which may detract from the visitors' enjoyment of the area. However, if communities are involved in tourism planning, they have the chance to voice any

concerns about inappropriate development and can potentially influence key developments and plans (Byrd, 2007). The manner and extent to which they are involved however, is largely determined by the resources available and the nature of the decision making process. Popular forms of community participation within UK national parks include public hearings, advisory committees, surveys, working groups, written comments and citizen review panels.

Its ability to create an integrated planning approach means that stakeholder engagement is advocated as a method to aid the pursuit of broader sustainable tourism development (Bramwell & Lane, 2000a; Cole, 2006; Lovelock, 2002; Wilson et al, 2009). However, this can only be achieved if collaborative processes are effective. According to Byrd (2007), this means that they need to possess five elements: fairness, efficiency, knowledge, wisdom and stability. In essence, collaboration needs to include all relevant stakeholder interests, be conducted in a timely and efficient manner, all stakeholders should have access to knowledge and information to ensure they understand the process and any decisions should be durable. However, in practice, this effectiveness is threatened due to the growing diversity of visitors and stakeholders involved in national parks which is making policy-making an increasingly complicated and protracted process (MacLellan, 2007; Thomas et al, 2003).

#### **4.3.2 Policy & Strategy Formation**

UK national parks have a statutory requirement to produce a management plan every five years, which outlines the overall vision and broad strategic direction for the park (UKANPA, 2012). It identifies the key issues affecting the area and the proposed management approaches being sought in order to tackle these and help conserve the national park for present and future generations. Management plans need to be succinct, highlighting the values of the national park and the distinctive features which need preserving. However, they also need to be flexible enough to accommodate changes in the internal and external environment (Thomas et al, 2003).

The management plan does not specifically relate to any one industry and nor does it provide any detailed planning or development policies. Thus, to complement it, many

national parks also develop a number of related, more detailed strategies which build on the broader objectives in the management plan and outline industry specific planning and management frameworks. Given that national parks exist as a system, it is important that these specific strategies are not developed in isolation and give due consideration to the other sectors and industries which exist in the area and also align with broader regional and national tourism objectives (Stevens, 2002). However, given that the management plan is concerned with the achievement of the national park's overall remit, it inevitably takes precedence if any doubt or conflict arises (Thomas et al, 2003).

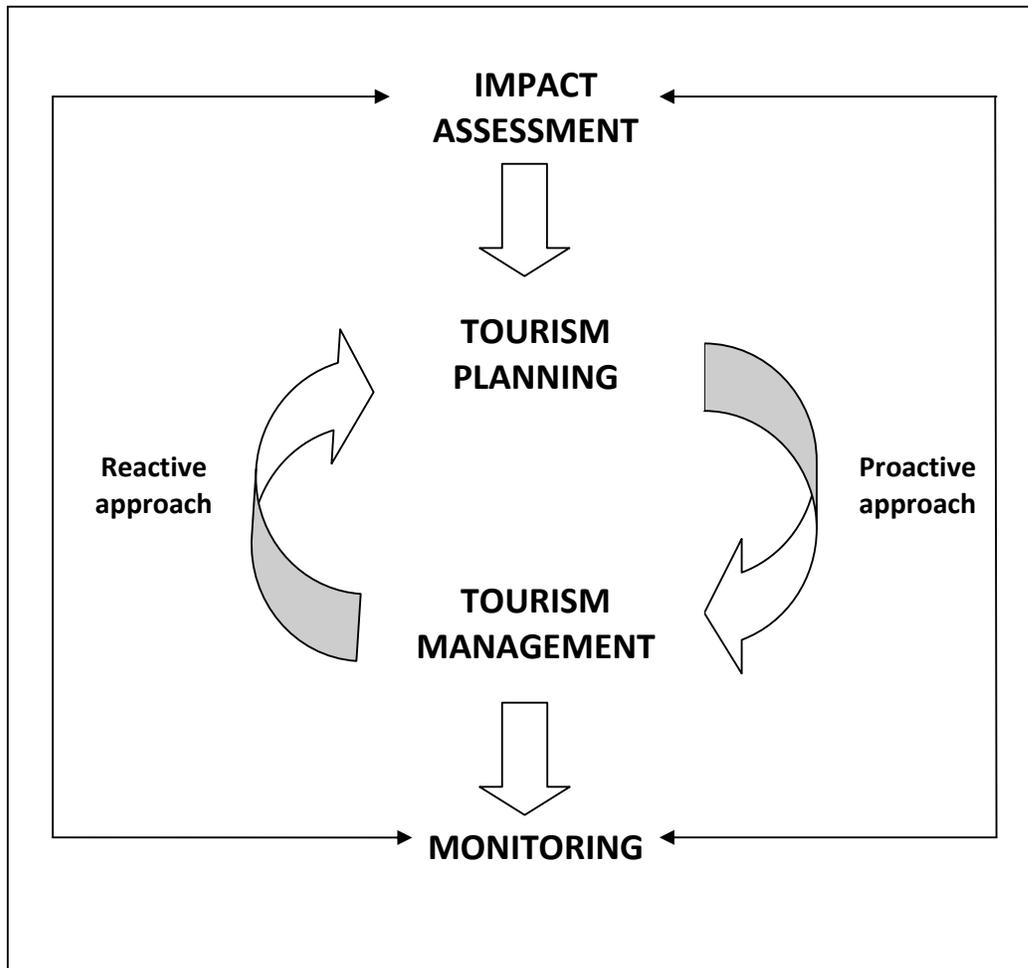
Whilst not compulsory, many national parks develop a tourism strategy to steer tourism development and ensure that specific tourism objectives are compatible with the wider management plan (Eagles et al, 2002). In the UK, such policies are normally produced by the NPA following a period of extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders. It often draws on past research and monitoring exercises to identify specific areas of concern and priorities for the future. The use of tourism strategies prevent planning from being ad hoc and, by outlining aims and objectives, provide the industry with structured guidance on future development (Eagles & McCool, 2000; Mason, 2003). However, as the policy is published and often distributed amongst key stakeholders, it is also a useful tool for communicating key concepts and definitions as well as the overall aims of the industry. This can help to develop universal awareness of key issues and minimise areas of conflict and misunderstanding.

The relevance and respective usefulness of management plans and strategies is questionable however. Whilst their production is widely advocated and in some instances, legally required, often many plans once produced go unused (Thomas et al, 2003). In part, this may be due to a lack of understanding amongst stakeholders about their role in delivering the objectives of the plan. This issue can be overcome through the increased involvement of stakeholder groups in planning and management processes, as detailed in section 4.3.1 above. If stakeholders are actively involved in designing objectives, they will develop an ownership over the plan, better understand their responsibilities and may be more accountable for their actions.

Other issues in operationalising plans and strategies stem from fundamental weaknesses in their design: inappropriate content; impractical objectives; inflexible aims; lack of detail and unrealistic timescales (ibid). Furthermore, tourism strategies specifically need to be dynamic and take account of changes in the macro and micro environment. To ensure objectives remain relevant, they require frequent revisiting and review and this often requires a substantial commitment in time, manpower and money (Stevens 2002). Such downsides can sometimes detract from the benefits of developing and promoting the strategy and thus discourage their use in day to day management.

#### **4.4 Tourism management**

Whilst planning is concerned with the identification of a future desired position, management is a practitioner-based technique concerned with the ongoing activities required to achieve this end goal (Kuo, 2002). In short, it determines “what actions occur when, by whom and at what cost” (Eagles & McCool, 2000: p.77). Whilst academic literature often approaches tourism management separately to tourism planning (Doswell, 1997; Kuo, 2002), the two processes are in fact inherently linked. Management is essentially a goal orientated process, however it is only through effective planning that appropriate goals and objectives can be outlined. Having identified the desired future position in planning, a *proactive* approach then needs to be employed to ensure that appropriate management techniques are employed to realise this vision. After all, “if planning is to change the future, it needs to be linked directly to the means of implementing actions” (McCool & Moisey; 2008: p.8). Progress against objectives needs to be monitored on an on-going basis and appropriate management strategies need to be *reactive* to the changes in the external and internal environments, with key findings fed back to planners where appropriate. In any one context, planning and management activities are likely to occur simultaneously with the processes forming an on-going cycle, as illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 4.1. Park planners therefore need to adopt a strategic, integrated approach to planning and management to ensure that they are harmonious and directly benefit one another.



**Figure 4.1: The relationship between tourism planning and tourism management**

Whilst generic management is often specifically focused on people, in the context of tourism, the focus extends to consider the management of the environment and social setting (Mason, 2003). This is particularly significant for protected areas where the natural environment is sensitive and the tourism offering is reliant on the conservation and maintenance of this resource base. Tourism management in this context is therefore concerned with both visitor management and resource management. Whilst these two components may be viewed independently, the interactions between tourism and the environment mean that they are inherently entwined. Visitor management often begins from the premise that tourists damage the very resource base they are visiting and thus, for the most part, is concerned with the minimisation of the negative impacts of tourism (Mason, 2005). Given that this includes environmental impacts, by managing visitor use and behaviour, inevitably, this also provides a level of

resource management. For example, visitor management may involve controlling the number of visitors to busier sites which in turn, helps to preserve well trodden routes, thus minimising resource degradation. Given the relationship between these two elements, resource management will not be given separate consideration here, but will be incorporated into discussions on visitor management.

Visitor management techniques can be categorised into two distinct approaches: 'hard' approaches which are predominantly regulatory and 'soft' approaches, which focus on visitor education (Kuo, 2002; Mason, 2005). 'Hard' approaches are primarily concerned with the control of visitor numbers (e.g. zoning) and/or the modification of the destination to cope with tourism (e.g. hardening of surfaces). 'Soft' approaches on the other hand, focus more on the modification of visitor behaviour, particularly through marketing and information provision (Kuo, 2002). Whilst the proceeding subsections look at these techniques in isolation, in practice, 'hard' and 'soft' approaches should be viewed as interdependent techniques that are most effective when used to complement each other. For example, whilst a 'hard' approach may be the restriction of visitor numbers, this could be complemented by a 'soft' approach, e.g. by attempting to modify the behaviour of those who do visit through the use of codes of conduct, which essentially issue best practice behavioural guidance.

As with tourism planning, the principles of sustainable tourism development should also be embedded into tourism management strategies. For example, park planners and managers constantly need to strike a balance between resource preservation and providing and maintaining quality visitor experiences (Bullock & Lawson, 2007). Thus, alongside the minimisation of negative impacts, visitor management is also concerned with meeting and exceeding visitor needs (Jim, 1989; Kuo, 2002; Mason, 2005). Whilst they receive relatively little attention in some case studies, visitors are a fundamental stakeholder group within *all* tourism destinations and it is vital to ensure visitor satisfaction so as to maintain a continuous demand for tourism in the area (Ceballos-Lascuirain, 1996; Jim, 1989; Wilson et al, 2009). Thus, a comprehensive marketing approach is required to identify the typologies of visitors and assess their appropriate needs before designing management strategies which are appropriate to meet these needs (Sowman & Pearce, 2000). Within national parks, the primary purpose for

visiting is often to appreciate the beauty of the natural environment. Thus, visitor satisfaction is directly linked to environmental quality as well as the provision of adequate facilities and services (Eagles, 1996; Farrell & Marion, 2002). Both 'hard' and 'soft' approaches to visitor management are therefore likely to impact visitor satisfaction, be it directly or indirectly.

#### **4.4.1 'Hard' approaches**

As stated above, 'hard' approaches to visitor management are largely regulatory and are primarily concerned with minimising the negative impacts of tourism activities (Mason, 2003; 2005). The two most discussed 'hard' approaches are the control of visitor numbers and the adaptation of the natural resource.

The control of visitor number impacts both tourism planning and management. At the planning stage, the focus is on determining the carrying capacity of a destination and incorporating this into policy documents and subsequent management strategies. The concept of carrying capacity implies that there is a numerical limit on the number of visitors a destination can host before the visitor experience is damaged and the natural resource and local community experience degradation (Inskeep, 1991; McCool & Lime, 2001). Traditional carrying capacities are based on a mathematical relationship between variables of concern and involve various assumptions (e.g., in relation to key values, ethics and politics) which are highly diverse and subjective (Farrell & Marion, 2002; Manning et al, 2002). However, the notion that the concept is a 'magic number' which *can* and *is* derived in practice is largely contested. As a distinct method to address the problems of tourism development, it is considered to be both "inappropriate and reductionist" (McCool & Lime, 2001: p.386). Visitor numbers are constantly fluctuating, both over short and longer term periods and thus, any numerical value calculated will likely be invalid over a sustained period. However the concept is not entirely useless as it forces planners to consider the future desired social, economic and environmental conditions and the trade-offs between competing goals which are acceptable to achieve this.

Within tourism *management*, controlling visitor numbers involves techniques to limit visitor numbers to distinct areas to match capacity limitations, spreading the number of visitors throughout the year or redistributing visitors away from honey pot sites to less visited areas of the national park (Buckley & Pannell, 1990; Eagles, 1996; Leung & Marion, 1999; Mason, 2005). In its most regulated format, such methods may include:

- The temporary or permanent closure of routes to allow the environment to 'rest' and repair itself (Kuo, 2002).
- A formal zoning management approach, whereby the national park is divided into different land use areas, e.g. agriculture, tourism and conservation areas (Inskeep, 1991).
- Formal rules and regulations, which directly and indirectly impact visitor numbers. Such examples include the use of charged car parks and traffic management routing (Orams, 1995).

While controlling visitor numbers may largely be considered to be a preventative technique as they divert visitors from certain areas, adapting the resource can often be perceived to be a protective measure, which allows for the 'wear and tear' of visitor use on the resource base (Mason, 2003). Resource adaptation often occurs following an increase in visitor numbers and thus deterioration in the quality of the natural resource. It can take two principle forms; either the relocation of facilities to more appropriate sites or hardening the resource base. The former is relatively self-explanatory and on the whole, in national park contexts, relates to the relocation of trails and footpaths. Specifically where there are issues with surface water, excessive usage can lead to high levels of degradation and erosion; an issue which may be addressed by their relocation to an angled slope with natural drainage (Marion & Leung, 2004). Whilst such relocation would prevent the need for site hardening, finding an appropriate place to relocate the facility to may be challenging as it would likely involve a movement to other, pristine areas of the park (Cahill et al, 2008).

Site hardening on the other hand, involves the development of existing facilities in their current location to enable increased visitor use. Examples may include the resurfacing of trails with gravel or concrete to facilitate visitor access or the assembly of fences to limit access to sensitive areas (Cahill et al, 2008). Developing robust surfaces enables

improved access for visitors whilst also minimising the potential future degradation of the site. However, such developments can be costly and often involve a longer term programme of maintenance in order to sustain their quality (Marion & Leung, 2004). Bullock & Lawson (2007) also note that hardening practices should be as 'natural looking' as possible to ensure they do not detract from the aesthetics of the landscape. If developments are not sensitive to their surroundings, they can negatively impact the nature and quality of a visitor's experience (Kuo, 2002). Cahill et al (2008) provide a good example, noting that walking on a primitive trail will inevitably provide a far different visitor experience to walking along a fenced boardwalk.

#### **4.4.2 'Soft' approaches**

Although some negative impacts arise from visitor presence, others are a result of their inappropriate behaviour whilst in the national park (Kuo, 2002). Largely, such behaviour occurs because visitors are not aware of the delicate nature of the park environment or the impact that their actions have on it. The 'soft' approaches to visitor management largely attempt to educate visitors and modify their behaviour through interpretation programmes (Staiff et al, 2002). Such programmes are designed to inform visitors about the objectives of the national park, promote the work of the national park authority and develop visitors' understanding of the park's environment (Eagles et al, 2002). They aim to stimulate visitor interest in the area and thus, encourage understanding, empathy and concern for conservation issues (Mason, 2005). This in turn, helps to develop and promote more responsible visitor behaviour (Moscardo, 1996; Orams, 1995; Tubb, 2003).

Examples of interpretation formats include the use of interpretation boards, the provision of specialised tour guides, the opening of visitor information centres and the development of leaflets and brochures (Eagles et al, 2002). Such techniques can influence visitor behaviours in numerous positive ways, including:

- Re-routing visitors away from popular sites to ease congestion;
- Encouraging visitors to under-used areas so as to contribute to the local economy;

- Redistributing visitors through the use of tour guides to ease the pressures of erosion on popular routes (Moscardo, 1996);
- Garnering support for specific conservation projects;
- Raising awareness and developing visitors' understanding and respect for local communities and cultures (Bramwell & Lane, 1993b);
- Encouraging responsible behaviour through the promotion of codes of conduct and persuasive communication (Brown et al, 2010; Mason & Mowforth, 1996).

Many national parks consider interpretation to be a fundamental element of their visitor management programme, with many viewing it as a panacea for addressing negative tourism impacts (Tubb, 2003; Vaske et al, 2000). By increasing their knowledge and appreciation of the national park, interpretation helps to create 'mindful visitors' who understand the impact of their actions and adapt their behaviour to support the area's overall goals (Moscardo, 1996). It can therefore substantially improve the management and conservation of destinations and thus, contribute to the achievement of broader sustainable tourism development. However, alongside this, interpretation programmes can also enhance the quality of visitor experiences (Kuo, 2002) by enhancing accessibility and providing insights into destinations (Mason, 2005). Thus, Orams (1995) describes the management technique as a 'win-win situation' for both park managers and visitors but only if it is effective in positively changing behaviours. Baylis (1993) warns of the danger of an "overzealous appetite for interpreted meaning" resulting in a diminished sense of wonder and personal response to the landscape. Thus, interpretation must be developed at a level which is unobtrusive and sensitive to the needs of *all* relevant stakeholders.

#### **4.5 Monitoring impacts**

Monitoring is an essential element of both planning and management strategies. Whilst planning determines the desired end goal and management outlines the day to day activities required to achieve this, monitoring is the process required to assess the relative progress towards the end goal (Eagles et al, 2002; Inskip, 1991). By assessing performance against objectives, monitoring enables trends to be identified and thus,

can inform management decisions as they strive to achieve 'best practice' (Monz & Leung, 2006).

Within national parks, monitoring the impact of visitor use is of particular significance to assess how levels of usage affect the natural and social environment. A process of ongoing monitoring is required so park managers can ensure any negative impacts are minimised or eradicated wherever possible. Some impacts occur with a low level of usage and managers need to respond to these rapidly to ensure they do not cause long-term resource damage. Other impacts are as a result of cumulative visitation. In isolation, individual tourists generally have a relatively small impact on the environment they are visiting. However, over time, this may result in substantial negative impacts following sustained periods of activity (Ceballos-Lascuirain, 1996; Farrell & Marion, 2002). A key example of this is trampling and erosion. Visitors may walk along the edges of fields or through woodland that does not have a designated path. Whilst there may be little effect on the environment when there is relatively low usage, as the footfall increases, it is not long before the area becomes well trodden and muddy, resulting in people widening the path to avoid the mud and in the process, trampling surrounding flora and disturbing fauna. If visitor management systems are in place, it may be possible to slow or stop the effects of cumulative usage before it reaches the stage where it damages flora and fauna, for example, by encouraging visitors to take an alternative route. In addition, if managed effectively, it may also be possible to identify potential preventive measures which would minimise the need for expensive, corrective actions such as site hardening (Farrell & Marion, 2002).

Monitoring impacts is a challenging and often expensive task. Many national parks are however required by law to undertake some form of impact assessment studies. At its broadest level, this may involve conducting a full impact assessment in relation to the overall park management plan, whilst more localised studies evaluate the impact of specific projects and developments (Eagles & McCool, 2000). Whatever the scale, impact assessment initially involves determining a range of values and critical indicators. These indicators form a set of reference points at which the economic, social and environmental conditions of the park are acceptable. Managers can then determine parameters which can be measured and monitored for significant changes

away from these ideals (Smith & Newsome, 2002). However, one of the biggest challenges is in determining appropriate indicators and subsequent parameters for changes, as the level of acceptable change is entirely subjective and will vary amongst stakeholders (Vaske et al, 2000). Furthermore, given that it is a living environment, there are constant changes to the social and natural environment and thus, indicators and parameters will need to be regularly revisited to ensure they remain valid (Eagles et al, 2002).

In practice, monitoring processes are often undertaken by organisations, such as the NPA and charities, e.g. through the work of rangers and environmentalists. However, aside from direct impact measurement, Eagles & McCool (2000) state that one of the simplest and most important elements of tourism monitoring is the measurement of visit attributes. This includes assessing volumes of visitors, visitor movement patterns, seasonality patterns, length of stays, visitor spend trends, accessibility and visitor satisfaction levels (Eagles et al, 2002; Jim, 1989). The primary means of assessing these attributes is through surveys of visitors and tourism businesses. However, there is often a lag time between collecting the data and reporting the results which can limit the overall usefulness of the findings, missing key trends and responding to issues too late.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

National parks are sensitive environments which are reliant on their natural landscape and ecology as their primary tourism attraction. Their dual remit, to conserve this landscape and provide recreational access are often perceived to be somewhat contradictory due to the inevitable negative impacts which accompany visitor use. Such impacts include littering, pollution, erosion, visitor-host hostilities and economic leakages *inter alia*. This can often lead to tensions amongst disparate stakeholder groups who interpret key concepts differently and thus, develop their own, unique perspectives and priorities. If left to its own devices, tourism can develop haphazardly and the industry potentially 'carries the seeds of its own destruction' (Mason, 2003). For national parks specifically, they face the potential of being 'loved to death' (EUROPARC, 2001) unless effective planning and management ensures development is at a level appropriate to the destination and acceptable to the stakeholders.

At its broadest level, planning involves analysing the existing internal and external environment to establish a desired future outcome. Management processes are then concerned with the day to day activities required to achieve this goal. In theory, these two processes are intrinsically linked, with the relative success of one being dependent on the effectiveness of the other. Managers therefore need to be proactive to develop strategies which can realise national park objectives whilst also being reactive to changes in the wider environment and the relative successes and failures of management processes.

The approach to tourism planning and management differs between destinations. However, given the increasing complexity and 'messiness' of tourism in national parks, there is general agreement that sustainable tourism development can provide a useful framework around which sensitive and appropriate development options can be explored (Eagles & McCool, 2000). However, the way in which this is done very much depends on the unique characteristics of the destination. No single planning and management approach is specifically advocated. Instead, it is suggested that the principles of sustainable tourism development should be embedded into broader tourism planning and management strategies, whilst taking into account the specific priorities and requirements of the individual national park. This relative flexibility thus enables the sustainable development approach to be adopted at all levels and across a multiplicity of destinations, regardless of their specific contexts (Inskeep, 1991).

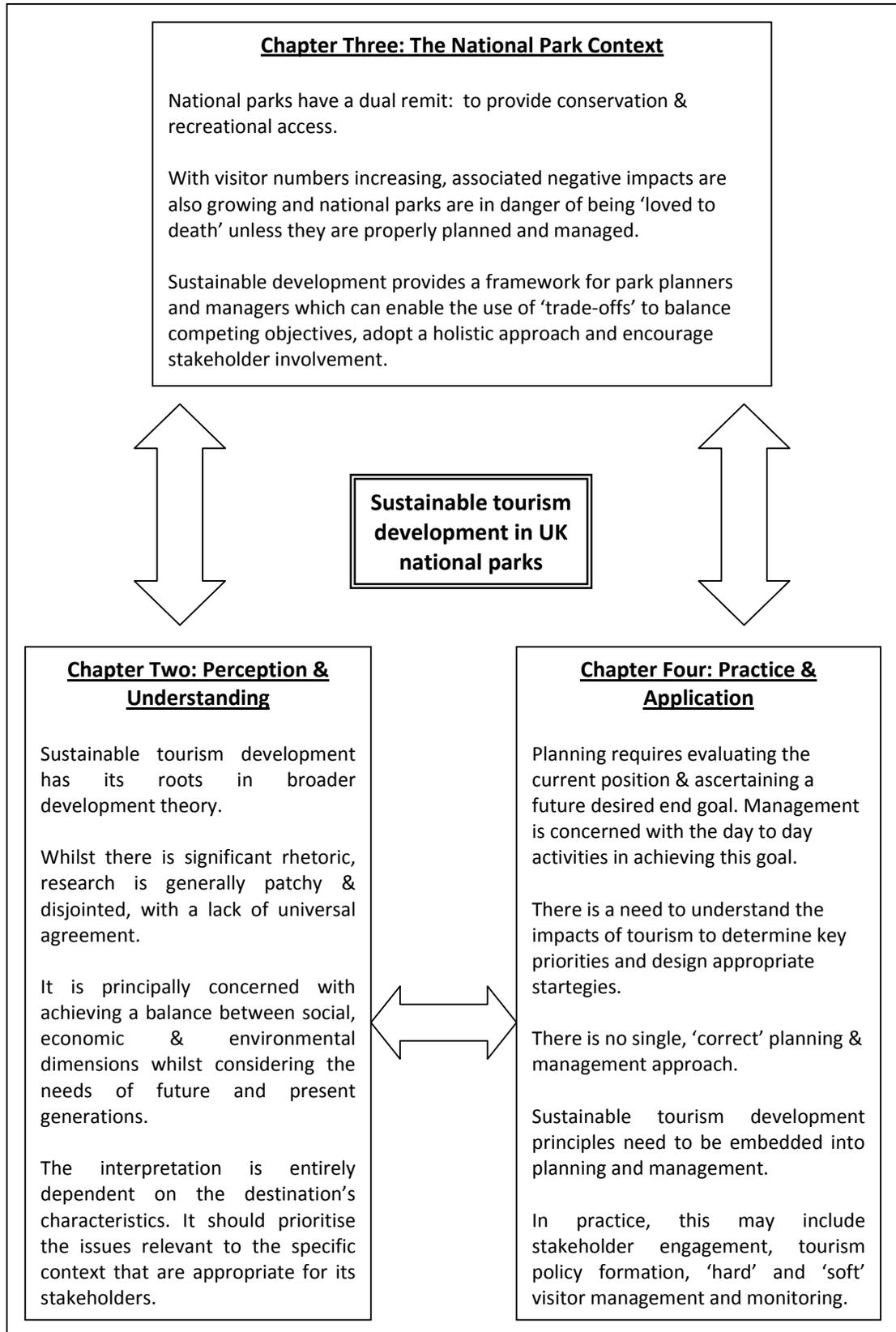
Whilst there are no prescriptive guidelines for developing a sustainable tourism development framework, case studies within academic research highlight some key methods which are widely adopted. Within planning, this includes stakeholder engagement, policy formation and capacity limitations. In management, it encompasses both 'hard' and 'soft' approaches, designed to directly influence visitor behaviour through regulation and education. To complement these, research also specifically highlights the importance of developing an ongoing monitoring system, whereby impacts and visitor trends can be measured to help inform and steer management decisions (Eagles et al, 2002). However, whilst advocated in theory, in practice, such

methods are often expensive, time consuming and of limited use due to their high turnaround time.

Much like theoretical interpretations, the practical approaches to sustainable tourism development vary according to specific contexts. This forms one of the central arguments both in this chapter and the research as a whole. Indeed, each of the literature review chapters has highlighted the need for flexibility in interpreting and applying key concepts. Specifically, they have stressed the importance of determining principles and approaches to development which are appropriate to the unique characteristics of the destination and acceptable to the key stakeholders involved therein. Thus, essentially, interpretations and practical approaches need to 'fit' the context. However, this chapter also postulated that adopting some sustainable techniques and methods is not enough. If the area is to strive for broader sustainable tourism development, the principles need to be embedded into the foundations of planning and management techniques. A common understanding of key concepts needs to be derived to allow the development of universal objectives which ultimately, will move the destination towards a more sustainable future.

This research is specifically concerned with national park contexts. Their dual remit to conserve the environment *and* provide recreational access makes planning and management particularly challenging yet, paradoxically is also one of the key reasons why it is so important. However, there are relatively few existing studies which examine the overall approach to sustainable tourism development. Instead, a significant proportion of research in this field seems to focus on the evaluation of specific aspects of planning and management, e.g. stakeholder engagement or site hardening. This research therefore attempts to fill this gap by adopting a broader perspective and analysing how two different national parks *embed* the principles of sustainable tourism development into their planning and management approaches as a whole. Rather than honing in on one or two specific elements, it will evaluate each area's *overall* perceptions of sustainable tourism development and examine how its respective principles are put into practice. The importance of context and its impact on planning and management decisions will also be explored through the use of two case studies, which offer both similarities and differences.

Overall, this research contains three central tenets which are presented in each of the literature review chapters. As illustrated in Figure 4.2, each chapter offers a different theoretical perspective, however all three are inherently linked. Together, the concepts therein provide a conceptual framework which underpins the thesis as a whole and specifically informed the design of an appropriate research strategy; details of which will be considered in greater depth in Chapter 5.



**Figure 4.2: The central tenets in exploring sustainable tourism development in national parks**

## Chapter 5

### METHODOLOGY

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#### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research strategy and methodological stance adopted within this research. Previously, when discussing methodologies, a large number of tourism studies have focused solely on the choice of data collection methods. However, Goodson & Phillimore (2004) suggest that advancements in qualitative tourism research can only be achieved through increased consideration of the inquiry paradigm and its links with wider ontological, epistemological and methodological debates. To ensure that qualitative studies are deemed to be rigorous, it is essential that

“...tourism researchers engaging with interpretive paradigms and qualitative methods and methodologies clearly justify their choice of approach and make visible their data collection and analysis procedures.” (ibid, p.38)

This chapter therefore seeks to provide this required transparency. It begins by analysing the underlying factors influencing the decision to adopt a qualitative research strategy. Section 5.2 then moves on to discuss the theoretical assumptions underpinning the choice of a research paradigm, before moving on to discussions surrounding the paradigm adopted in this study: the interpretive paradigm. The following sections then present the methodological elements of the research strategy. Section 5.3 evaluates and justifies the decision to employ a case study methodology whilst Section 5.4 outlines the collective case study approach adopted here. It also introduces two case study sites and justifies their inclusion in this research. Section 5.5 then moves on to analyse the data collection methods undertaken as part of the case studies: documentary sources, in-depth interviews and participant observation. Details are also provided about the issues encountered during the data collection process for each of the methods. Section 5.6 then discusses the within-case and cross-case strategies employed within the data analysis, including the initial process of qualitative

coding. Finally, the chapter will evaluate the issues of data reliability, validity and trustworthiness and outline how the relevant criteria have been demonstrated within this study.

## **5.2 A qualitative research strategy**

Tourism is a complex phenomenon that intersects many different disciplines and thus has been the subject of various interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research papers for some time (Tribe, 2004). Such papers however are often theoretically rooted within the main discipline of the researcher and it is only recently that tourism has begun to gain prominence as a field in its own right (Darbellay & Stock, 2012; Echtner & Jamal, 1997; Leiper, 2000; Pernecky, 2010). Early tourism research reflected these broader theoretical fields and was therefore dominated by quantitative and statistical methods (Botterill, 2001; Riley & Love, 2000; Walle, 1997). Whilst it is acknowledged that no one method is theoretically superior to another, the value of quantitative techniques alone is questionable. Whilst statistical techniques can be a useful means of illustrating trends and explaining phenomena, it is often less valuable to researchers who are trying to understand human behaviours and emotions and their associated meanings (Hollinshead, 1996; Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). This is because quantitative researchers are largely concerned with generalising their findings and thus, during the research process, they “abstract the phenomenon that is being studied from the rest of the social world and...fix meaning within what might be described as a contextual vacuum” (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004: p.31). Such methods are therefore not always appropriate for social research which is often highly subjective and situated in the complexities of interacting social and cultural spaces. Instead, qualitative approaches should be utilised as these emphasise:

“...studying things in their natural settings, interpreting phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them, humanising problems and gaining an ‘emic’ or insider’s perspective.”  
(Phillimore & Goodson, 2004: p. 4)

They also enable researchers to gain an understanding of broader cultural and social dimensions which cannot be explained with statistics and quantified data. Given the

complex nature of tourism, it is perhaps not surprising that recent years have seen an increase in qualitative and mixed method research strategies within this field as well as broader social research (Bryman, 2012; Dann & Phillips, 2001; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002; Riley & Love, 2000; Walle, 1997). However, that is not to say that qualitative techniques are superior to quantitative methods but merely that they are either complementary or more appropriate in certain circumstances. Ultimately, the choice of research strategy is dependent on the individual researcher and the phenomena being studied. It should not be selected based on preconceived notions but should be evaluated with reference to the context and with specific regard to the research aims and objectives (Walle, 1997). As outlined in the aims and objectives in section 1.4 of chapter 1, this research was primarily concerned with the interpretation of concepts, the role of individuals in social settings and the impacts of tourism. It adopted a case study approach that compared and contrasted the experiences within two national park sites and thus, the social context of each site was incredibly important. On this basis, a qualitative approach was deemed to be the most appropriate research strategy.

Qualitative research is largely influenced by the philosophical assumptions and worldviews of the individual researcher (Creswell, 2007). Largely, these consist of three constituent elements:

- *Ontology*: how the researcher views the nature of reality;
- *Epistemology*: the relationship between the researcher and the phenomenon being researched;
- *Methodology*: the way in which the phenomenon is studied.

Together, these influence a researcher's basic set of beliefs, otherwise known as their paradigm, which represents "simply the most informed and sophisticated view that its proponents have been able to devise" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: p108). Although there are a variety of paradigms presented in qualitative research theory, there are four key paradigms which recur regularly: positivist, post-positivist, interpretivist and critical theorist. These paradigms are continually evolving and therefore, it is possible to discern the presentation of different characteristics both amongst theorists and over

time (Creswell, 2007). An examination has been made of various methodology theorists and a brief description of the key elements of each these paradigms is presented in Table 5.1. Whilst a more detailed analysis of the key differences will not be delved into here, more comprehensive discussions are presented by multiple authors in Denzin & Lincoln's *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2005) as well as the works of Bryman (2012), Creswell (2007), Goodson & Phillimore (2004), Patton (2002) Robson (2011) and Veal (2011). It is necessary however to provide a brief analysis of the paradigm in which this research is situated: the interpretivist paradigm.

Paradigm	Key elements
<b>Positivist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researcher adopts an objective stance during the study</li> <li>• Closely linked to empirical science</li> <li>• Often tests pre-determined hypotheses</li> <li>• Verified hypotheses are established as ‘facts’</li> <li>• The knowledge obtained is considered to be the ‘objective truth’</li> <li>• Involves quantitative research methods</li> </ul>
<b>Post-positivist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar to positivist</li> <li>• Stress the need for researcher objectivity but they do acknowledge potential biases (including researcher bias based on their background and experiences)</li> <li>• Data found to be consistent with hypotheses is considered to be ‘not falsified’ rather than ‘fact’</li> <li>• Find ‘probable facts’ which will exist until they are proven or disproven by future studies</li> </ul>
<b>Interpretivist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledges the existence of multiple realities</li> <li>• Places reliance on people’s own interpretations of situations and behaviours</li> <li>• Influenced by the cultural and social setting</li> <li>• Researcher needs to interpret the multiple perspectives to develop an understanding of the phenomena</li> <li>• Involves qualitative research methods – often multiple methods</li> </ul>
<b>Critical theorist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research acknowledges the values that underlie assumptions and common sense perceptions</li> <li>• Concerned with power and cultural relationships</li> <li>• Researchers seek to produce knowledge which is reliant on its historical situatedness and ability to produce ‘action’</li> <li>• Involves dialogic and dialectical methodologies</li> </ul>

**Table 5.1: Key elements of the four main research paradigms**

(References: Bryman (2012); Crotty (1998); Lincoln & Guba (2000); Robson (2011); and Veal (2011).)

The interpretivist paradigm “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998: p.67). It rejects the positivist notion that there is one objective truth and acknowledges the existence of multiple realities which can only be understood from the perspectives of those who live and

work within it (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004; Robson, 2011; Schwandt, 1994). Researchers actively engage with individuals involved in the phenomena under study in order to ascertain their interpretations and meanings of their experiences within the social world (Creswell, 2007). There is emphasis on the importance of 'getting inside' individuals' minds in order to properly understand their perspectives (Veal, 2011). Equally, it is important to understand the social and cultural setting in which the study exists and thus, context plays a key role within many interpretivist studies. Researchers must seek to understand the multiple interpretations on offer so they can build a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study. This paradigm therefore lends itself to the process of qualitative research and often entails the use of multiple data collection methods which enable the researcher to acquire and develop multiple perspectives (Robson, 2011). In practical terms, interpretivist researchers use broad open questions, giving participants a great deal of flexibility and allowing them to position themselves within the research based on their own prior experiences. The researcher must then use the multiple perspectives gleaned to analyse the phenomena as a whole and ultimately, construct their own interpretation based on their background, experiences and beliefs (Creswell, 2007).

These elements of a researcher's background can affect their ability to be truly objective in the research process. Indeed, particularly in qualitative studies, where there are significant interactions between the researcher and respondents, Guba & Lincoln (1994) question the neutrality of researchers. Past experiences, values and knowledge will not only influence the overall design of the research strategy but can also lead to bias in the data collection and analysis. Thus, if the results are to be meaningful, it is essential that researcher power is neutralised and bias minimised as far as possible. This was considered to be particularly important in this study, given that one of the specific aims of the study was to explore and understand *multiple* perspectives. This objective could only be achieved by using a flexible research approach which enabled new avenues of interest to be explored without being constrained by pre-conceived notions and biases. A conscious effort was therefore made to adopt a neutral stance throughout the research process. This was achieved through the use of non-leading questions, providing neutral settings for interactions with respondents and using triangulated strategies to enhance credibility and

trustworthiness *inter alia*. Further comments on trustworthiness are provided in Section 5.7, later in this chapter.

This research is concerned with *understanding* key stakeholders' interpretations of sustainable tourism development and its subsequent application within specific national park contexts. In order to achieve this aim, various objectives were outlined (see section 1.4 of chapter 1) which involved gathering different perspectives on conceptual meanings, application of methods and tourism impacts. By adopting a neutral stance, it was acknowledged from the outset that multiple interpretations and perspectives existed and that the research needed to ascertain what these were, how they differed amongst stakeholder groups and also, between different contexts. The research is therefore clearly situated within the interpretivist paradigm and a methodology was required that would involve using multiple qualitative techniques in order to attain a holistic understanding of the phenomena in each of the individual national park sites. On this basis, the most appropriate methodology was deemed to be case study, which is discussed in greater detail in the following section.

### 5.3 A Case Study Methodology

As a method of inquiry, a case study is defined by Creswell as:

“a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed in-depth data collection involving **multiple sources of information** (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material and documents and reports) and reports a case **description** and case-based themes.”

(Creswell, 2007: p.73 *emphasis in original*)

It is a methodology that is best suited to explanatory studies which focus on the “hows” and “whys” and aim to develop a deeper understanding of the issues under investigation (Yin, 2009). Case studies provide researchers with the opportunity to study a given phenomenon within its natural setting (Veal, 2011; Yin, 2009). Unlike other qualitative techniques that focus on a number of predetermined variables, the case study methodology enables the area of study to be viewed holistically as system,

thus highlighting the importance of context. It is not surprising then that case studies are well utilised in tourism research given that context is particularly important due to the unique nature of tourism destinations (Beeton, 2005; Decrop, 1999; Xiao & Smith, 2006). Individual cases often have incredibly complex backgrounds and thus their historical, geographical, social, cultural, economic and political contexts can vary significantly (Stake, 2005). Qualitative case studies are therefore well suited to studies that require a researcher to delve into the intricacies of contexts and interpret the meanings of complex phenomena (Beeton, 2005; Verschuren, 2003).

Case studies, unlike many other methodologies, have no “hard and fast rules” (Gerring, 2004). For those seeking a prescriptive methodology this is problematic, however it does also have its benefits. One advantage is that case study methodologies have the flexibility to adopt a variety of data collection methods and techniques. Yin (2009) identifies six sources of data commonly used in case studies: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations and physical artefacts. In his principles of case study design, he suggests that no one data collection technique is advantageous to another and in fact, the various data sources are complementary. A well designed case study should therefore use as many sources as possible. This is advantageous for two reasons. Firstly, utilising more than one data collection method enables the researcher to analyse the same phenomenon from a variety of perspectives, resulting in a more holistic understanding of the issues (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Beeton, 2005). Secondly, the case study will benefit from greater credibility as the methodology is a triangulated research strategy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Tellis, 1997; Veal, 2011; Yin, 2009).

Triangulation is a procedure of using different types of data or methodologies to corroborate one another thus adding credibility to the findings of the research (Silverman, 2006). Qualitative case studies often utilise *methodological triangulation* by using multiple qualitative data collection techniques to provide evidence for a theory or corroborate a phenomenon (Oppermann, 2000; Yin, 2009). In the case of this research, a combination of documentary sources, in-depth interview and participant observations were used to identify the relevant issues (see Section 5.5 below for more details). This use of multiple methods enables the identification and, to an extent, the

elimination of the limitations of using a one-dimensional data collection strategy and can reduce methodological bias (Oppermann, 2000). Furthermore, it can help to minimise misrepresentation and misunderstanding within case study findings (Stake, 1995) and can also contribute to the trustworthiness and credibility of the research (Decrop, 1999).

Despite the regular application of case study methodologies, they are still generally “held in low regard” and perceived as being a weak research strategy (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Stoecker, 1991; Xiao & Smith, 2006). One of the primary reasons for this is the purported lack of rigor adopted within case study design and implementation. Researchers are often reproached for failing to adopt a strategic approach to their research and thus failing to minimise bias in their results (Gibbert et al, 2008; Yin, 2009). A primary concern among critics is that case studies often display a “bias towards verification, understood as a tendency to confirm the researcher’s pre-conceived notions” (Flyvbjerg, 2011: p.309). This criticism however is not restricted to case studies but is echoed across many qualitative research strategies (Decrop, 1999). Given the role of the researcher in qualitative research and particularly those operating within the interpretive paradigm, it is an unsurprising criticism. Interpretive researchers have a key role in determining the value of data and interpreting results both throughout data collection and during the analysis phase. Whilst inevitably the researcher’s experience and views will impact lines of inquiry, unlike other more structured methods, the flexibility of the case study method means that it is possible to explore avenues that were not predetermined. George & Bennett provide a good example of this:

“When a case study researcher asks a participant “were you thinking X when you did Y” and gets the answer “No, I was thinking Z” then if the researcher had not thought of Z as a causally relevant variable, she may have a new variable demanding to be heard.”  
(George & Bennett, 2005: p.20)

Another well stated criticism of case studies is the lack of generalisability of the research findings. As only a single case or small selection of cases is studied, it is not possible to use the results to generalise across the wider population (Yin, 2009). Whilst

this is a valid statement, it is important to note that a lack of generalisability does not devalue case study results (Flyvberg, 2011). They are still capable of contributing to the body of knowledge and are particularly useful when issues are site dependent or contextually sensitive. After all, the very basis of the case study methodology is its context and generalisations do not take account of contextual issues (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). There is also a danger that researchers can become so focused on generalisability that they fail to see important features of the individual case (Stake, 2005). Generalisability is therefore *not* an essential element of all research. Indeed, many case studies openly state that their aim is not to produce generalisable findings but merely to increase the understanding of the unique case being investigated (Flick, 2009; Hammersley & Gomm, 2000; Stake, 1978; Yin, 2009). This means that whilst the results cannot be applied universally, they can contribute to theory and aid the greater understanding of a phenomenon (Veal, 2011).

It is important to note at this stage that the intention of this research was not to produce generalisations but rather to optimise the understanding of the issues being studied within the specific case sites. Generalisation beyond these cases is not possible due to the nature of national parks and the complex tourism industry which exist within their boundaries. As stated in Chapter 3, no two National Parks are the same. They exist within their own unique historical, geographical, cultural and social systems and many have significantly different tourism stakeholders, management policies and structures. This research therefore sought to understand the specific approaches and interpretations of the issues within the chosen national park case study sites. Indeed, the deliberate selection of contextually different case sites (as discussed below) was intended to highlight the contextual nature of this research and the way it was applied.

#### **5.4 A collective case study approach**

Whilst case study results are not intended for generalisation, it is possible to utilise them comparably across multiple case sites by adopting a collective case study approach. This involves the examination of the same phenomenon across more than one site to illustrate the key issues (Creswell, 2007). One of the drawbacks of this is that, invariably, as the number of cases included in the study increases, the level of

detail in the case study decreases. However, this is not necessarily detrimental to the case study results. Instead of reporting on one case in explicit detail, a collective case study enables issues to be identified and investigated across a selection of sites with the intention of evaluating *similarities and differences* (Flick, 2009; Veal, 2011). The researcher is therefore able to analyse a phenomenon from multiple perspectives both *within* and *across* the cases. Collective case studies are therefore generally considered to be more robust and reliable (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009). On this basis, this approach was adopted in the present study. Details of data analysis will be discussed in greater detail in Section 5.6.

One of the primary issues in utilising a collective case study approach is selecting appropriate cases for inclusion. Whilst it is important to select cases based on their unique nature and their potential contribution to the research, the researcher also needs to consider aspects of accessibility. As time and financial resources are often limited, cases need to be easily reachable and preferably, with individuals identified who are willing to participate in the study (Stake, 1995). Consequently, purposive sampling is often adopted to enable the selection of cases which were deemed most relevant and sufficient for the purposes of the research (Jankowicz, 2005). This approach was adopted in this research and cases were selected based on the following criteria:

1. The cases should be nationally designated National Parks.
2. The cases should recognise and/or use the concepts of “sustainable development” and “sustainable tourism” within key strategy and policy documents, to enable evaluation of different interpretations of the terms.
3. The cases should have sufficiently different geographical, historical, social and cultural contexts so that a broad level of perspectives can be obtained *between* sites.
4. The cases should be of a sufficient enough scale that a variety of primary and secondary data sources are available, enabling different perspectives to be gathered *within* the sites.

5. The cases should demonstrate a suitably established tourism planning environment to enable analysis of the broader planning and management environment.
6. The level and types of tourism on offer should be diverse between sites so that tourism management and impact issues can be analysed.
7. The cases should have a sufficient number of tourism stakeholders that are willing to engage with the research.

At the outset of this study, it was thought that any number of national parks from around the world could fulfil this criterion. However, following initial enquiries and pilot testing, the scope of the research was tightened to limit the case selection to UK national parks. This was, in part, due to the insurmountable, practical difficulties encountered in collecting sufficient data from overseas national parks. The pilot study involved Tsavo East National Park in Kenya. This is a Category II National Park and there are no permanent residents situated within the park boundaries. There are a small number of accommodation providers but the majority of stakeholders, such as tour guides, charities and governance organisations are dispersed outside of the park. Due to the structure of the national park, it was found that identification of a sufficient number of key stakeholders was limited and establishing the required access both to individuals and key documents was extremely challenging. Even the contacts which were established were unreliable and despite arranging specific times for discussions, the potential respondents failed to attend. Due to their location, following up on potential opportunities often led to wasted time and financial resources.

It was therefore decided that it would be prudent to focus on national parks that were closer in proximity and had a less rigid structure. The UK national park system was deemed to be better placed to provide an array of documentation and access to key respondents. The details of the UK system were established during the literature review. As outlined in Chapter 3, UK national parks are actually Category V protected areas which are described as 'Protected Landscapes'. Unlike national parks in other areas of the world, they are freely accessible, living landscapes which contain communities, villages and even towns. In order to meet their dual objectives of conservation and recreation provision, a number of secondary objectives have been

outlined which directly align with sustainable development principles. Thus, it was hypothesised that tourism development in the UK national parks should, in theory at least, utilise and adhere to the principles of sustainable tourism development. The research was therefore re-engineered to focus specifically on the interpretation and application of sustainable tourism development within UK national parks as this was perceived to offer richer, more meaningful research potential.

Although there are no prescriptive guidelines on the number of case studies, it might have been desirable to include a number of national parks to enable greater comparison between different sites. However, the initial assessment of UK national parks revealed them to be significantly complex case studies. Thus, due to the time and financial constraints on this study, it was determined that no more than two cases should be selected to ensure that sufficient depth of analysis could be undertaken.

At this stage, the UK national parks were briefly analysed and, following initial searches and enquiries of potential respondents, two national parks were identified for the study: the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest. They were chosen above other areas due to their respective differences, both in terms of spatiality, their relative 'newness', the number and nature of stakeholders and land ownership structure. Therefore, as well as meeting the required numbered criteria outlined above, the two national parks also appeared to provide sufficient contextual variation and thus, were deemed to be suitable cases for this research.

Further details and descriptive data about the case study sites are provided within chapters 6 and 7, which detail the research findings. For reference purposes however, a brief description of each is provided below, with a summary of key data relating to both national parks provided in Table 5.2

### **1. Yorkshire Dales National Park**

The Yorkshire Dales national park covers an area of 1,762 square kilometres across two counties in northern England. Established in 1954, it is classified as a Category V protected area and its primary objectives are landscape protection and recreation (UKANPA, 2012). The area is a rural, living

landscape and consequently has a resident population of 20,229 (as per the latest census statistics). The boundaries to the park are open and access is free. The latest estimate suggests there are approximately 9.5 million visitors each year (ibid) and these are predominantly domestic tourists. Visitors are particularly drawn to the busier sites of Grassington, Settle, Hawes and Sedbergh as well as the more isolated moorland and countryside in between. The land within the park is not state owned and land owners therefore have responsibility for their own land. Consequently, there are a large number of stakeholders involved in the management of the national park. Central amongst these is the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA), an independent body within local government whose remit is to conserve and enhance the environment, wildlife and cultural heritage, whilst promoting the understanding and enjoyment of the area by the general public (YDNPA, 2012a).

## **2. New Forest National Park**

Established in 2005 and covering an area of just 570 square kilometres, the New Forest is one of the UK's youngest and smallest national parks. Despite its small size, the resident population is 34,400 (UKANPA, 2012) and the local government estimates that it attracts approximately 13.5 million visitors a year, the majority of these being domestic day trip tourists (NFDC, 2012). Key honeypot sites include the coastline, Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst and Burley, although, as the name of the area suggests, a large proportion of visitors are also attracted by the forestland and the wild ponies which graze there. Unlike the Yorkshire Dales, nearly 50% of the land in the New Forest is owned by the Crown and managed by the Forestry Commission, a non-ministerial government body responsible for the protection of the UK's forestlands. Other key landowners include the National Trust, Hampshire County Council, the Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and individual landowners. The New Forest National Park Authority works with these stakeholders to "promote the purposes of the National Park and the interests of those who live and work within it" (NFNPA, 2012).

	<b>Yorkshire Dales</b>	<b>New Forest</b>
<b>Protected area category</b>	Category V – protected landscape	Category V – protected landscape
<b>Location</b>	UK - Northern England; inland from coast	UK – South West England including 42 km of coastline.
<b>Year of designation</b>	1954	2005
<b>Size</b>	1,762 sq.km	570 sq.km
<b>Resident Population</b>	20,229	34,400
<b>Number of visitors</b>	9.5 million	13.5 million
<b>Landowners</b>	Individuals, particularly farmers	Individuals; nearly 50% owned by Forestry Commission.
<b>Main authority</b>	Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority	New Forest National Park Authority
<b>Governing authorities</b>	<u>County Councils:</u> North Yorkshire; Cumbria  <u>District Councils:</u> Craven; Richmondshire; South Lakeland;	<u>County Councils:</u> Hampshire  <u>District Councils:</u> New Forest
<b>Key tourism attractions</b>	Bolton Abbey and railway; Hardraw Force; Malham Cove; Gordale Scar; Aysgarth Falls; natural countryside	Beaulieu; Bucklers’ Hard; Hurst Castle; New Forest Wildlife Park, natural countryside & forestland
<b>Key tourism activities</b>	Hiking; cycling; climbing; visiting honeypot market towns, moors & countryside	Camping; cycling; walking; visiting honeypot towns, coastline & forestland; wild ponies
<b>Honeypot Sites</b>	Grassington, Settle, Hawes and Sedbergh	Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst and Burley

**Table 5.2: A summary of the initial profiles of the national parks selected for this research**

## **5.5 Data Collection Methods**

As Yin (2009) attests, case studies use multiple complementary data collection methods in order to obtain different perspectives and build a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study. The case studies in this research utilised documentary sources, in-depth interviews and participant observation and the following three sections provide analysis of these methods and justification for their use.

### **5.5.1 Documentary Sources**

Documentary sources form an integral element of case study research, providing vital background information and adding greater depth and understanding to the context and phenomena being studied (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Veal, 2011). They can take many forms including guide books, brochures, leaflets, marketing information, official strategy documents, website text, newspapers, formal reports and correspondence *inter alia*. Given the increasing abundance of such documents available on the internet, gathering documentary evidence has become easy, cheap and quick (Hodder, 2000; Jennings, 2001). An inherent danger is that researchers become overwhelmed by the vast quantities and varieties of data available and waste time trying to review documents which are not relevant to the current study. Yin (2009) recommends that researchers incorporate systematic searches and procedures into their data collection plans to avoid being overwhelmed. He suggests researchers sort their data by their relevance to the key aims of the research and then apportion time spent conducting analysis according to their perceived importance. Although this selection procedure should reduce the time wasted analysing documents which are not then used in the research, it is also flawed as it may result in researcher biased selectivity, particularly if not all of the available documents have been identified, collected and analysed.

Whilst the majority of documentary sources may be easy and quick to find, analysing them can take considerably longer. Criticisms have been made of researchers who place an overreliance on documents in case study research, without giving due regard to the context in which such documents were prepared (Yin, 2009). Indeed, documentary sources are not produced specifically for the purpose of the current research investigation and inevitably, often have a very different primary objective to

the current researcher. As such, they are unobtrusive and offer the potential to show valuable insights without disturbing the setting or requiring any specific participant interaction (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). It is however important to establish the original purpose, author and intended audience of the document so that the researcher can identify any potential biases and apply an appropriate level of critical understanding when analysing the text (Hodder, 2000; Jennings, 2001; Yin, 2009). A key drawback is that, as there is no interaction between the original author and the researcher, this may result in reporting bias whereby the documents are incorrectly interpreted or taken out of context (Bryman, 2012; Yin, 2009).

It is important to weave documentary analysis into the data collection and not leave it until the end or complete it in its entirety at the beginning of the process (Patton, 2002). This is because documents can be used for two distinct and equally valid purposes: 1. to draw inferences and identify areas where further investigation may be required and; 2. to “corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (Yin, 2009: p.103). As this social research was situated within a live setting where new documents are frequently published, it was important to maintain an awareness of new and updated publications arising throughout the duration of the research term which may have been applicable and required analysis. Whilst this ensured that the research was as comprehensive and up to date as possible, this continuous ‘searching and revising’ research strategy was both challenging and time consuming.

This research primarily used documentary sources to complement other data collection techniques and help to build a solid, triangulated case study methodology. The documents collated were analysed manually, by assessing the frequency and nature of key phrases and imagery and helping to identify key themes within the research. Amongst other uses, all of the documents collated, read and analysed contributed to the contextual understanding of the case sites. Here follows a description of the key types of documents collated and analysed, their purpose within this research and a brief outline of the key problems encountered when gathering the data.

## **1. National park authority publications and websites**

Within the UK, the national parks are managed by government funded independent national park authorities. Each national park authority is legally required to produce a Management Plan which outlines the key aims and objectives of the park over a five year period (UKANPA, 2012). Within both the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest, this document is just one of many strategies and policies published by the authority. Both have also produced strategies relating to tourism, sustainable development, woodland, the economy, culture, biodiversity and planning, amongst others. Each policy is written in conjunction with relevant stakeholders including landowners, business managers and local residents. Whilst all of the available strategies have been reviewed, some were more cursory than others depending on their subject and its relevance. Those which were particularly significant however included:

- A Strategy and action plan for Sustainable Tourism in the Yorkshire Dales 2013-2018 (YDNPA, 2013a).
- Special qualities, special experiences: An integrated recreation and tourism strategy – policy and principles (YDNPA, 2010).
- Yorkshire Dales Management Plan 2013-2018 (YDNPA, 2013b).
- Yorkshire Dales Corporate Plan 2013-14 (YDNPA, 2013c).
- New Forest National Park Management Plan 2010-2015 (NFNPA, 2010a).
- New Forest National Park Recreation Management Strategy 2010-2030 (NFNPA, 2010b).
- New Forest National Park local development framework: Core strategy and development management policies (NFNPA, 2010c).

These documents had three primary uses within this research. Firstly, they provided the respective national park authority's 'official' interpretation of the concepts of sustainable development and sustainable tourism. Secondly, they helped to identify the key stakeholders within the national park, some of which were then subsequently interviewed. Thirdly, they highlighted some of the key issues relating to tourism impacts and suggested strategies for

addressing these concerns. This information was then used to guide both the interview topics and the subsequent observational fieldwork.

The national park level strategy and policy documents were freely available on the respective websites of each of the authorities:

- [www.yorkshiredales.gov.uk](http://www.yorkshiredales.gov.uk)
- [www.newforestnpa.gov.uk](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk)

This meant that documents were quick and free to download and access. The websites themselves also provided a vast amount of information which was useful in helping to build a profile of the parks. This included data about key attractions, historical background, visitor data, management structures and key stakeholders. The websites were also a useful means of gleaning valuable insights into the NPAs' priorities and actions and enabled the identification of key themes in the research, which were probed further during interviews.

## **2. Regional and national tourism publications**

Within the UK, the broad objectives in the national park tourism strategies are underpinned by both regional and national tourism strategies. In 2011, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published a national tourism policy which outlined the country's overall approach to the industry and the key growth areas (DCMS, 2011). Analysis of this strategy was undertaken to set the context for tourism development in the UK. This was especially useful given that many of the broader aims are reflected in the regional tourism strategies produced by local government bodies. Regional strategies are produced in collaboration with key stakeholders in the respective areas and follow a similar format to national park authority strategies. However, they also identify the needs of stakeholders outside of the park boundaries and are therefore a useful means to establishing the national park's position in the broader environment. Once again, such documents also outline the respective authors' definitions of the key concepts of sustainable development and sustainable tourism and identify their strategy for addressing problem areas.

As with the national park documentation, the regional and national strategies were freely available on the internet. These documents were primarily used to assess the position of the national parks within broader spatial strategies and analyse how the strategies were aligned with the national park objectives. It was however, more difficult to identify their respective usefulness to this thesis and select the sections of the documents which were relevant to national park areas.

### **3. Guide books & marketing materials**

There are a significant number of guide books which relate specifically to the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the New Forest National Park. Many of these provide historical data as well as descriptions of the key areas of interest and tourist activities on offer. Furthermore, a large amount of marketing material is circulated by the local authorities, regional marketing associations and individual attractions in and around the national park. The purpose of such documents is to attract visitors to the area and thus, they are positively biased and fail to provide any account of the impacts of tourists themselves. Their primary use in this study was therefore to help build a profile of each of the parks by identifying the honeypot sites, key stakeholders, the prime visiting times (thus establishing seasonality issues), major attractions and tourism products on offer.

Another key source of marketing material was the internet. The prominence of the internet as a key source of data for potential visitors has seen a dramatic increase in recent years. Whilst attractions, hotels and other tourism providers use the internet as a cheap form of advertising, tourists themselves are also sharing first hand experiences and perspectives on sites such as Trip Advisor ([www.tripadvisor.co.uk](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk)). Although such websites can be a useful means of providing background information, they can also contain significant biases which need to be acknowledged when conducting analysis. Websites were therefore used as a complementary source of information and consideration was given to the author of the site when establishing its reliability.

### 5.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews

One of the primary objectives of case study research is to obtain multiple perspectives of the same phenomenon and, according to Stake “the interview is the main road to multiple realities” (Stake, 1995: p.64). This research used semi-structured interviews with key informants. Semi-structured interviews are informal, conversation-like social interactions that are useful to investigate an individual’s experiences, attitudes and values (Jennings, 2005; Silverman, 2006). Ahead of the interview, the researcher will formulate a list of themes or topics for discussion and these will be used to help steer the discussion along the lines of the research objectives (Saunders et al, 2000). This freedom enables the researcher to explore areas of interest in depth without being constrained by a rigid interview schedule, allowing them to develop greater insight and a deeper level of understanding of the phenomenon under study (Jordan & Gibson, 2004).

The flexibility in the design of the interview schedule allows researchers to probe interviewees for further details, allowing them to explain and elaborate on their responses. It is also possible to vary the structure of the interviews from respondent to respondent; omitting irrelevant questions and honing in on areas where the respondent has a specific expertise or knowledge (Veal, 2011). This means that the interview format, length and topics covered can vary between respondents and thus, exact replication is impossible (Jennings, 2001). Consequently, concerns have been raised over the credibility of interview data (Jordan & Gibson, 2004; Robson, 2011). However, this can in fact be seen as one of the method’s strengths. Semi-structured interviews are normally conducted with a small number of key informants, who are experts in their field or able to offer a distinct *unique* perspective on the phenomenon under study within a specific context. The structure and nature of the interview’s responses will therefore illustrate their individual experience and/or viewpoint on the issues and this in itself may prove to be insightful (Veal, 2011).

One way of ensuring that the interview topics discussed remain relevant to the research objectives is by using a checklist or ‘interview protocol’ (Creswell, 2007; Veal, 2011). This can also be used by the researcher to note the respondent’s verbal and non-verbal communication and is especially important when the interview is not

recorded (an issue that will be discussed in more detail below). The interview protocol for this study was designed around the key topics derived from the research objectives and literature review (see Appendix A for an example). Specifically, the key topics for discussion were:

- the interpretations of sustainable development and sustainable tourism;
- the role of sustainable development within tourism planning and management;
- the National Park concept and structure;
- the conflict between 'use' and 'protection' in National Parks;
- the role of tourism stakeholders in planning and management;
- the interaction between tourism stakeholders;
- the sustainability of tourism products within the National Parks; and
- the management of tourism impacts.

This protocol was used as the basis for each of the interviews however, the amount of time spent on each topic varied according to each respondent's area of expertise or experience. In this study for example, national park authorities and local authority representatives were asked specific questions relating to management whilst residents' questions were focused on their perceptions of the impacts of tourism on the local environment and economy.

The interviews for this study were carried out with a variety of tourism stakeholders within each of the National Parks. Appropriate individuals were identified based on the following selection process.

The first stage of identification of respondents was to conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify the role and relevance of different organisations and individuals within each of the Parks. The types of stakeholder groups were very similar within both national parks. These have been identified and their relative interests have been noted and mapped using Mendelow's stakeholder analysis matrix. Mendelow's matrix is a management tool used to assess the relative power and interest of key stakeholders (Johnson et al, 2007). Whilst it was originally developed for organisational use, it has equal merits in assessing the relative position and priorities of stakeholders in any given context. The

model is also useful to determine how the respective power of the stakeholders shifts when their dynamics change. For example, communities or tourism providers are perceived to have low power individually but when they join a tourism network, they move to being a key player. In the context of this research, Mendelow's matrix has been used to identify key stakeholder groups which can inform the research and should be approached as potential key respondents to participate in interviews. The model has therefore been applied to each national park and the results are presented in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 respectively.

		Level of Interest	
		Low	High
Level of Power	Low	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Minimal effort</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Residents not involved in tourism:</i> Residents have low interest in planning and management and, individually, low power.</li> <li>• <i>VisitBritain, EnjoyEngland:</i> As they are national tourism bodies, they have low power and interest as their primary objectives are in setting national priorities and international marketing.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Keep informed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Welcome to Yorkshire:</i> Being a regional tourism marketing agency, they are highly interested in the area but have limited power.</li> <li>• <i>Affected residents:</i> On their own, residents have limited power but if they are directly affected by tourism impacts (e.g. by traffic congestion) they will have a high level of interest.</li> <li>• <i>National Trust, Natural England, Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust etc.:</i> Although tourism is not directly in their remits, they have a high interest as it may impact their charitable activities though their power is low.</li> <li>• <i>Attraction &amp; accommodation providers:</i> Individually, they have limited power although they have a high interest in tourism planning &amp; management.</li> </ul>
	High	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Keep satisfied</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tourists:</i> Visitors have high power as they are the lifeblood of the industry however, they have limited interest in planning and management.</li> <li>• <i>DEFRA:</i> They provide funding to the NPA and have a high position of power, although low levels of interest in relation to their overall remit.</li> <li>• <i>Landowners not involved in tourism:</i> Particularly farmers, often allow visitors access to their land for rights of way and possess high power. Often display limited interest beyond this.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Key Players</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>National Park Authority (NPA):</i> Is responsible for overall governance and management of the national park therefore has high power and interest.</li> <li>• <i>Local authorities:</i> The majority of governance is transferred to the NPA, but the local authorities still have significant power and interest in the area and contribute to the formulation of tourism policies and strategies.</li> <li>• <i>Community networks:</i> Groups with similar interests join together and are able to directly contribute to tourism planning &amp; management.</li> <li>• <i>Dales Tourism Business Network:</i> A forum whereby tourism providers network, share expertise and are able to contribute to tourism planning &amp; management.</li> </ul>

Figure 5.1: A stakeholder analysis of the Yorkshire Dales National Park

	Low	<b>Level of Interest</b>	High
Level of Power	Low	<u>Minimal effort</u>	<u>Keep informed</u>
	High	<u>Keep satisfied</u>	<u>Key Players</u>

Low

Minimal effort

- *Residents not involved in tourism:* Residents have low interest in planning and management and, individually, low power.
- *VisitBritain, EnjoyEngland:* As they are national tourism bodies, they have low power and interest as their primary objectives are in setting national priorities and international marketing.

Keep informed

- *Affected residents:* On their own, residents have limited power but if they are directly affected by tourism impacts (e.g. by traffic congestion) they will have a high level of interest.
- *National Trust, Natural England & other charities:* Although tourism is not directly in their remits, they have a high interest as it may impact their charitable activities though their power is low.
- *Attraction and accommodation providers:* Individually, they have limited power although they have a high interest in tourism planning & management.
- *Marketing associations:* Limited power in broader planning decisions but high levels of interest in industry issues.

High

Keep satisfied

- *Tourists:* Visitors have high power as they are the lifeblood of the industry however, they have limited interest in planning and management.
- *DEFRA:* They provide funding to the NPA and have a high position of power, although low levels of interest in relation to their overall remit.
- *Verderers:* Govern the landowners and their commoning in the forest, particularly in relation to the free roaming of animals such as ponies. They have high power due to their governing responsibilities but low interest in tourism planning and management.

Key Players

- *National Park Authority (NPA):* Is responsible for overall governance and planning of the national park therefore has high power and interest.
- *Local authorities:* The NFDC is the lead tourism authority in the Park and has significant power and interest in the area, contributing to the formulation of tourism policies and strategies.
- *Community & business networks:* Groups with similar interests join together and are able to directly contribute to tourism planning & management.
- *Forestry Commission:* owns over 50% of the land and has both high power and interest in tourism within the park.

**Figure 5.2: A stakeholder analysis of the New Forest National Park**

A purposive sampling technique was then used to identify specific interview respondents from within these stakeholder groups. This enabled key informants to be chosen who could use their knowledge and experience to provide insight into the key topics and add value to the research (Patton, 2002). Table 5.3 shows details about the numbers and background of respondents recruited within each of the National Parks. Further details of respondents can be found in Appendix B, which also contains each respondents 'reference', utilised within the Finding chapters when referencing their specific interview responses.

National Park	Key stakeholder group	No. of respondents interviewed
Yorkshire Dales	National Park Authority Representative	1
	Local Authority (Tourism) Representative	1
	Marketing/Regional tourism agencies	2
	Farmers	1
	Charities	3
	Tourism Businesses	5
	Residents in or near park boundaries	3
	Tourists	3
New Forest	Total:	19
	National Park Authority Representative	1
	Local Authority (Tourism) Representative	1
	Charities/land owners	1
	Tourism Service Providers	5
	Residents in or near park boundaries	4
	Tourists	4
	Total:	16

**Table 5.3: Key Informants interviewed within each national park**

A total of 35 interviews were conducted across the case study sites, however as illustrated in Table 5.3, these were not evenly distributed. This disparity was primarily due to issues of accessibility and time and resource constraints. Some problems were encountered when recruiting respondents from the New Forest. Although prospective respondents in the early stages of the project had indicated their interest in the project and willingness to participate, they were not available for interviews at the time when

the primary data was being collected on site. This meant that some of the interviews needed to be conducted by telephone. One of the key drawbacks of telephone interviews is the inability of the researcher to see non-verbal communications and body language which can provide valuable insights into responses (Jordan & Gibson, 2004). It also makes it difficult to develop the level of rapport required to encourage the respondents to engage in discussion and 'open up' about their experiences (Robson, 2011).

Another inconsistency between the interviews was the manner in which the data was recorded. Whilst it would have been advantageous to audio-record all of the interviews so that they could be transcribed for data analysis, some of the interviewees expressed a preference not to be. One of the benefits of audio-recording interviews is that it can be replayed at a later time so that details of the interview can be examined more closely (Silverman, 2006). Detailed transcripts can also be made which can aid the identification of themes when conducting data analysis (see Section 5.6). Audio-recording the interviews is however entirely optional for the respondents and depends on an individual's personal preference. For the interviews not recorded in this study, notes were taken which detailed their verbal responses to the questions and topics being discussed. Reliance on taking notes in interviews can be problematic though as it can interfere with the interview process. This often means that the notes taken are vague and lack sufficient detail and reliance is placed on the interviewer's memory to fill the relevant gaps (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). In an effort to minimise this problem, as soon as each interview finished, time was spent adding to the notes made in the interview in an effort to record as much of the interview detail as possible.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted at a time and location convenient for the respondent and in most instances, this was within their professional context (i.e. their office) or a neutral setting (i.e. a hotel lobby). It would have been preferential to conduct all of the interviews in a neutral space as this helps to minimise bias within the results and adds credibility to the data (Jordan & Gibson, 2004). However, given that interviews are time consuming and many of the respondents were either working professionals or on holiday, their time was precious. The location and time were therefore determined by the respondents and a great amount of flexibility was

required to accommodate this. By meeting in a place chosen by them, the respondent is made to feel more comfortable and should be more willing to be honest and open about their opinions. It also helps to redress the balance of power between interviewer and interviewee and highlight the importance of the interviewee's opinions. Despite the best intentions of researchers to attain a neutral stance, there is a tendency for their individual preferences and opinions to influence research design, from the choice of interview question right through to interpretation (Fontana & Frey, 2008). This can jeopardise the credibility of the data collected and result in interviewer and/or interviewee bias. *Interviewer bias* occurs when:

“the researcher consciously or unconsciously steers the interviewee towards expressing views that agree with the research themes sought”

(Jordan & Gibson, 2004: p.222)

The researcher's own beliefs, values or perceptions may affect the structure of the interview, the way in which the questioning progresses and the interpretation of the interviewee's responses (Saunders et al, 2000). Interviewer bias can also impact on the interviewee's perceptions of the research and therefore influence their response, resulting in interviewee bias. *Interviewee bias* is where respondents adapt their answers to what they think the researcher is looking for. This may be caused by the interviewee feeling anxious about the topics being discussed or intimidated by the researcher or the environment where the interview is taking place. If the data collected is to be rigorous and deemed credible, these biases must be minimised wherever possible. Whilst interviews can provide a rich source of data for studies, that data is only truly valuable if it is honest (Jordan & Gibson, 2004). Robson (2011) suggests bias can be minimised by selecting appropriate locations where the respondents could speak freely, using straight-forward, clear language and ensuring that leading cues were not used when reacting to respondents' answers. All of these techniques were utilised in this research and, furthermore, the respondents were all granted anonymity and no personal details (aside from job titles where relevant) were taken, thus encouraging them to respond honestly to the questions.

The interviews conducted in this study generated a significant amount of data. It is important however to reiterate here that the purpose of the interviews was not to generalise the findings amongst the stakeholder groups but to provide a breadth of understanding of the research topics from various perspectives (Yin, 2009). The participants recruited were therefore not considered to be representative of the entire stakeholder group within each national park but merely offered one interpretation from their specific context. For example, in the New Forest, four residents were interviewed but in no way is this report suggesting that their responses are indicative of the wider resident population within the Park (which at the time of this study amounts to approximately 34,400). The strength of the interview data is therefore in the breadth of perspectives obtained as this helped to provide a holistic view of the research issues. A clear limitation of this approach however, is that the research lacked depth by only interviewing a small sample from within the stakeholder groups. Whilst increasing interview numbers in this research was not possible due to resource constraints, future research would benefit from interviews with more representatives from each of the stakeholder groups to provide this greater depth and contribute of the research objectives.

### **5.5.3 Participant observation**

Observational techniques allow the study of phenomena from a new dimension which can enlighten the researcher about the complexities of the social setting and context specific issues (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Yin, 2009). Primarily, it involves observing aspects of the environment and human behaviour which are difficult to capture in other data collection methods. This research uses participant observation, a technique which requires researchers to have “firsthand involvement in the social world chosen for study” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006: p.100). It allows the researcher to move away from pre-conceived notions about settings and fully engage in their own on-site experiences (Patton, 2002). Indeed, one of the key strengths of participant observation is that it:

“...excels in the possibility of gaining an in depth understanding of a situation in its natural or usual social context and, especially by providing a sense of what has been called as ‘insider’s view’ of that situation and context.”

(Belsky, 2004: p.275)

This *‘insider’s perspective’* is particularly significant within case studies as one of the primary objectives of this methodology is to gain an in-depth, holistic understanding of the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). The data generated from other research methods (e.g. interviews) report only other individuals’ perceptions of what they consider to be relevant or important. Direct observations however, enable the researcher to gain an unencumbered viewpoint about issues which may have been neglected by interviewees or which may have otherwise escaped the attention of people situated in the setting (Patton, 2002). In providing this additional dimension to the research, participant observation is therefore deemed to be “invaluable in producing an “accurate” portrayal of the case study phenomenon” (Yin, 2009: p.112).

One of the primary objectives of participant observation is to gather data which can adequately describe key elements of the phenomena being observed: the setting, the activities occurring, the participants and any associated meanings. Detailed field notes should be taken which contain factually accurate data and provide thick descriptions of the observations. In essence, the field notes should be of sufficient quality that an independent reader can fully understand the situation (Patton, 2002). This is however one of the key practical difficulties in conducting participant observation. Whilst these thick descriptions are desirable, the researcher needs to be immersed in the social setting and thus, may struggle to disengage in order to make substantial notes (Yin, 2009). Notes are therefore made when opportunities arise and thus are reliant on the researcher’s memory of details and associated meanings.

One means of providing memory prompts and ensuring that descriptions are not missed, is to use an observation schedule. Much like an interview schedule, this helps to guide the researcher by providing a rough structure to their observations. It identifies the categories which the researcher is interested in and ensures that field notes are made systematically so that each of the required categories are addressed

(Bryman, 2012). A key drawback of using such a schedule is that researchers may become too focused on the pre-identified issues and neglect to observe the more unusual or unprecedented occurrences, which ultimately may be more interesting and insightful. Whilst this research used an observational schedule to guide the field notes (see Appendix C), it was not used as a pro-forma document, but rather to identify key broad areas of interest. During the on-site visits, field notes were made as soon as the opportunity arose. To supplement these notes and provide additional documentary material, a travel diary was also kept whilst at the national parks. This was done for two reasons: firstly, it enabled notes to be kept about my experiences in a natural manner which did not draw attention to the fact I was a researcher. Many travellers record their feelings and experiences in diaries and it was therefore not considered unusual that I was recording my descriptions. Secondly, the diary enabled free writing on the experience, enabling a more personal reflection on my experiences and their associated meanings. Once the on-site visit was complete, this diary was then reviewed and key elements were added to the detailed field notes before reflections were made on the meanings of the interactions and experiences.

However, even using such recording techniques, observational techniques are still criticised due to their subjectivity. As there is no cross-checking completed and no direct quotes are recorded, it is not possible to confirm the researcher's interpretation of the situation. Thus, the technique is criticised due to its susceptibility to researcher bias (Adler & Adler, 1994). This is perhaps one of the primary reasons that observational techniques are very rarely used as an isolated data collection method. They are however, incredibly common within case studies, to provide another perspective on the setting and create a more holistic study. They were therefore deemed to be an effective and necessary complementary method in this research.

Whilst many advocates of participant observation espouse the importance of prolonged engagement, Patton (2002) asserts that the duration of observation should be determined by the nature of the study rather than an ideal. It only needs to be appropriate, to meet the aims of the study and the questions being asked. In this research, participant observation does not form the primary data collection method as it is being used as one of three complementary techniques. Furthermore, the role

adopted was that of a tourist in each of the national parks, which in itself, is a short-term period of travel involving recreational, leisure or business activities. It would therefore not have been appropriate to undertake a prolonged period of engagement. Instead, prior to the observations taking place, the average length of stay by visitors in each national park was researched in order to determine the length of stay to adopt within the participant observation. These were as follows:

- Yorkshire Dales: 4 nights
- New Forest: 5 nights

The activities undertaken during the participant observation varied between the sites. This was in part due to the nature of the parks and the types of activities prevalent. Both the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest are openly accessible to everyone and largely, visitors do not decide which activities to participate in until they are in the national park. In order to replicate tourism experiences, activities were determined on-site following visits to the respective Tourist Information Centres on arrival. All of the participant observations were conducted during the summer months of 2011, in the respective 'tourism seasons' in each of the national parks.

Alongside field notes, digital photographs were taken to aid the recording of observations and convey the key characteristics examined during the on-site visits. Still photography is particularly valuable when used in conjunction with observational field notes (Bryman, 2012). It allows researchers to either provide examples of the issues discussed in their field notes or visually illustrate issues which are difficult to adequately convey in words (Veal, 2011). These were revisited numerous times during the data analysis to aid the interpretation of the field notes and establish the meanings of the experiences.

## **5.6 Qualitative Coding and Analysis**

Unlike quantitative research techniques, case studies do not have a prescribed formula to guide researchers through the data analysis stage of the research. As with most qualitative research methodologies, one of the key issues with case studies is the sheer amount of raw data collected and available for analysis. "The multiplicity of data

sources and forms” can present a significant challenge and result in ‘information overload’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994: p.55). Patton makes a key point about qualitative studies, when he states:

“The challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive amounts of data. This involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal”. (Patton, 2002: p.432)

Indeed, one of the primary requirements in qualitative projects is dealing with a vast amount of words and their multiple meanings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Researchers need to use their judgement and be selective with what they deem to be important and thus, what they choose to analyse.

One of the most common forms of approaching qualitative data analysis is by using coding. It should be noted at this stage that this is not the analysis itself, but is merely an approach to the organisation of the data and thus, forms part of the process of analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Coding enables the identification and grouping of relevant extracts from various sources. It moves analysis beyond the individual document and encourages the researcher to see ‘across the data’ in order to understand the broader themes and issues occurring (Richards, 2009). Coding can be applied to all types of text documents and is particularly useful in case studies due to the variety and amount of textual data collected (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). In the context of this research, the textual data is drawn from interview transcripts, interview notes, observational field notes, various documentary sources and websites. Given the comparative nature of the overall research question, the data analysis was divided into two distinct stages. The first stage involved within-case analysis which examined the data for each national park individually in order to gain an understanding of the issues within their specific contexts. The second stage then involved cross-case analysis, whereby the common issues, central themes and distinct differences between the case study sites were identified and evaluated.

Richards (2009) provides a clear explanation of the three stages of qualitative coding and this method was employed during the within-case analysis:

**1. Descriptive coding:**

This entails extracting the factual attributes about the data being analysed. It does not involve any interpretive skills and merely describes the relevant facts about the case.

**2. Topic coding:**

This is the first stage of the interpretive analysis and involves allocating the data to pre-determined categories or topics, starting primarily with the themes identified within the literature review (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It does not look for meaning in the text but merely uses 'broad brush strokes' to assign data to its relevant analytical grouping ahead of further analysis (Richards, 2009). The primary topic groupings in this research were taken from the initial model of sustainable tourism development in national parks, proposed in Chapter 4. From this, further topics were then selected based on the findings from within the relevant sections of the literature review, contained in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

**3. Analytical coding:**

This stage requires interpretive skills and careful, systematic interrogation of the descriptive and topic coded data. It considers the context and requires the research to reflect on the *meaning* of the data, rather than just the facts or general topic area. It enables categories to be redefined as new meanings are identified and ultimately, creates conceptual categories that express new ideas and themes about the data (ibid).

The process of data coding can be undertaken through the use of various data software packages, such as Nvivo. However, such techniques can be very time consuming and lead to a detachment between the researcher and the data being analysed, resulting in key elements being missed. Thus, to avoid such issues, it was determined early on that the coding would be done by hand to enable constant interaction with the data.

In adopting this approach, Richards (2009) highlights the need to be systematic and transparent in order for the coding to be reliable and valid. This is particularly significant when there are multiple cases being analysed, as there are in this research. However, there is a danger that a systematic approach may result in data reduction. Somewhat inevitably due to the nature of qualitative research, the amount of raw data collected can be vast and overwhelming (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and coding is a means of extracting the data which seems to be most relevant. However, the initial topic coding often uses a list of predetermined topic categories and, in applying this coding, researchers risk ignoring the *uncategorised data* which may contain interesting insights and could enhance the research (ibid; Richards, 2009; Silverman, 2006). To avoid this, during the analysis process, the original raw data was revisited and reviewed on a number of occasions to ensure that additional coding was not required and significant issues had not been missed.

Once the coding of the data was complete, the analysis was undertaken. This involved examining the data categorised under each code, reflecting on its meaning, interpreting the results and then linking this interpretation to existing theories discussed within the literature review in chapters 2, 3 and 4. Initially, this process was conducted for each of the national parks individually to form the within-case analysis. The results of the within-case analyses are provided in the following two chapters, with Chapter 6 dedicated to the Yorkshire Dales and Chapter 7 to the New Forest. Following this, the results were reviewed and the codings revisited to enable cross-case analysis, thus forming the comparative element of the research. Cross-case analysis involves grouping all of the case study data together to identify common themes and central issues as well as key differences (Patton, 2002). The findings from the cross-case analysis are presented in Chapter 8.

## **5.7 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness**

There are a great many research papers which espouse the importance of validity and reliability within research design and execution. However, such concepts are primarily associated with the positivist research paradigm (Veal, 2011). *Validity* “refers to the degree to which findings can be generalised across social settings” whilst *reliability* is

taken to mean “the degree to which a study can be replicated” (Bryman, 2012: p.390). Whilst some qualitative researchers acknowledge their significance and seek to directly address these issues (Silverman, 2006), others question the applicability of these concepts to qualitative research (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Bryman, 2012; Decrop, 2004; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2002; Veal, 2011). To use reliability and validity criteria assumes that the social reality is stagnant and can be replicated (Bryman, 2012). However, social science research is largely concerned with human behaviour, attitudes and emotions and, perhaps most significantly, changing social situations. The aim of qualitative researchers is therefore not to find a ‘generalisable’ conclusion, but to research the phenomena in a specific context and draw conclusions on that case alone. Lincoln & Guba (1985) therefore argue that qualitative research should instead be evaluated for *trustworthiness* using the following alternative criteria:

1. Credibility: the authenticity of the findings;
2. Transferability: the applicability of the findings to other contexts;
3. Dependability: the consistency and reproducibility of the findings; and
4. Confirmability: the neutrality of the findings.

However, whilst it is easy to state the importance of these criteria, Baxter & Eyles (1997) suggest that there is often an inadequate account of how these criteria are met during the course of the research to ensure the results are trustworthy. It is imperative for qualitative researchers to specifically address the trustworthiness criteria within their work and ensure that their methodology and findings are consistently and accurately recorded. This not only makes the research more rigorous but also more stringent against potential criticisms from positivist researchers (Decrop, 2004). Consequently, here follows an evaluative account of how these criteria have been addressed in this research and areas where improvements could potentially have been made.

### **5.7.1 Credibility**

The most important evaluative criterion for qualitative research is credibility (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). The notion is very much related to the broader interpretivist paradigm

and is underpinned by the idea that there is no single perspective of reality, but rather multiple perspectives which are individually constructed (ibid; Patton, 2002). Thus, the credibility criterion can be addressed within research through various confirmatory methods, two of which will now be evaluated: respondent validation and triangulation. Respondent validation involves providing respondents with an account of the transcription and/or research findings and requesting comments on the researcher's interpretation (Decrop, 2004). Although many researchers highlight the benefits of respondent validation, as Bryman (2012: p.391) attests, "it is highly questionable whether research participants can validate a researcher's analysis". The analysis phase draws heavily upon concepts and theories which can often be complex and difficult for participants to understand. Asking them to corroborate if their responses have been correctly analysed therefore seems to be something of a pointless task, as in many instances they will not know. Other studies merely suggest providing respondents with a copy of their transcription to ensure the words they used matched their intended meaning (Shenton, 2004). Within this research, at the time of the interviews, respondents were asked if they wanted to see a copy of the transcription but largely, the responses were negative. A copy of the analysis in its raw format was not offered to respondents as it was felt this would not be significantly beneficial for the reasons outlined above. Instead, some respondents did request to see a copy of the full thesis on completion and this request will be obliged.

Another key means of adding credibility to a study is to employ triangulation. Triangulation is the process of looking at the same phenomena using a variety of different data sets or methodologies (Decrop, 1999). This can increase the richness and credibility of findings whilst also guarding against the potential accusations that findings are merely a result of a single method or data set (Decrop, 2004). However, triangulation should not be viewed as a technique to demonstrate that multiple methods yield the *same* results. This is because each method reveals different aspects of the same phenomena. Triangulation should therefore be regarded as a test of general consistency, which should be used to corroborate findings, illuminate issues and minimise biases within individual methods and data sets (Patton, 2002). Research identifies various types of triangulation however, the primary type most relevant here is *methodological triangulation*, which involves the use of more than one research

method to examine the same phenomena (Oppermann, 2000: p.142). As discussed in Section 5.3 above, by using a case study methodology, this research has incorporated methodological triangulation into the research strategy by intermixing interview data, observational data and documentary sources.

### **5.7.2 Transferability**

For many qualitative researchers, this criterion is not considered as important as the issue of credibility because they are primarily interested in the experiences and meanings within the context they are studying rather than discovering broader, transferable findings (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Patton, 2002). However, Lincoln & Guba (1985) stress the importance of producing 'thick descriptions' within the write up of studies. This involves providing extensive descriptions of data and the fieldwork sites so that other researchers can assess the transferability of the findings into other contexts (Bryman, 2012; Decrop, 2004; Shenton, 2004). Consequently, the results chapters that follow contain thick descriptions of the data collected and acknowledgments are made where there were areas which were considered to be lacking.

### **5.7.3 Dependability**

The issue of dependability is largely concerned with accurate and systematic documentation and consistent interpretation (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). It entails retaining complete and accurate accounts of the entire research process, from the initial design through to the original data and the subsequent findings and analysis (Bryman, 2012; Decrop, 2004). Specifically, interviews and fieldnotes require accurate recording and transcription so they provide a verbatim record of the research results. This enables an independent researcher to audit the researcher's interpretation of the findings for accuracy. Given that this research has generated a significant amount of data and due to time and financial restraints, no such auditing has been employed. However, all interviews and observational fieldnotes have been transcribed verbatim. The original notes and recordings have also been retained and revisited multiple times throughout the course of the study to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions and consistency of the interpretations gleaned.

#### **5.7.4 Confirmability**

This criterion is closely related to the notion of objectivity. Findings should not be influenced by the interviewer's biases and motivations but instead, should be determined by the respondent and the situation being studied (Bryman, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is recommended again, that an auditor be used to assess confirmability and "correct the researcher's prejudices" (Decrop, 2004: p.161). Whilst an auditor has not been used, the results of analysis have been discussed with independent persons (including supervisors and peers) and notes have been kept detailing the reasoning behind interpretations. This has meant that the research has avoided being biased due to personal values and beliefs and the findings have been arrived at in good faith.

#### **5.8 Conclusion**

Whilst some tourism research is still dominated by quantitative methods, studies examining behaviours, cultural impacts and social settings are often better suited to qualitative techniques. The key aim of this research is to examine the interpretations and application of sustainable tourism development within UK national park sites. Understanding the phenomena within the specific national park contexts was vitally important and thus, a qualitative approach was deemed to be most appropriate. When using a qualitative research strategy, the methodological choices and approaches need to be adequately documented and justified so that the findings may be deemed sufficiently rigorous. This chapter therefore sought to provide this required transparency by outlining and explaining the reasons behind the key decisions made during the course of this study.

The research strategy is underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. Rather than accepting that there is one single 'truth' as emphasised by positivists, interpretivists acknowledge the presence of multiple realities and researchers seek to gather as many of these interpretations as possible. Data collection therefore often involves multiple, complementary methods to enable researchers to conduct a well-rounded study and gain a holistic understanding of the phenomena.

This research adopted a multiple case study methodology which selected two UK case study sites based on a list of predetermined criteria (as outlined in section 5.4): the New Forest National Park and the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The case studies utilised documentary sources, participant observation and semi-structured interviews to collect the relevant data. The benefits and drawbacks of each of these methods have been discussed at length in the respective sections of this chapter. Following completion of the fieldwork, the data was then analysed in two phases: within-case analysis and cross case analysis. A vast amount of raw data was collected and this was initially sorted into relevant topics using qualitative coding. Relevant extracts from all of the data sources were grouped together to enable identification of recurrent themes, which were then reflected upon in light of existing tourism and development theory identified within the literature review. Once coded, the data was then analysed on an individual case study basis to form the within-case analysis. The codings and themes were then revisited to identify key similarities and differences between the sites and enable completion of the cross-case analysis. The results of the within-case analysis are presented within chapters 6 and 7 whilst the cross-case analysis is included in chapter 8.

This chapter has highlighted the appropriateness of the research strategy and the respective decisions made. However, it should be noted that the research strategy was by no means perfect and various challenges presented themselves throughout the course of the data collection. However, the very nature of case studies means that researchers are required to be flexible and adapt their approaches as required. Thus, when difficulties presented themselves, an alternative route was always found. This did mean that there were some inconsistencies in the approaches, for example, when face-to-face interviews were not possible, these were conducted over the phone which meant that it was not as easy to build a rapport or audio record the findings. However, as case studies do not have a prescribed format, such inconsistencies were not deemed to be hugely significant as the data sources were not analysed in isolation, but used to complement each other. Overall, the research design was therefore deemed to be appropriate to meet the overall aims and objectives of the study and allow presentation of a comparative case study of the two UK national park sites.

## Chapter 6

### RESEARCH FINDINGS: YORKSHIRE DALES

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#### 6.1 Introduction

The research findings are presented on a case by case basis. This chapter forms the first of the findings chapters and focuses on the data collected in relation to the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Whilst the chapter draws heavily on the results of first hand interviews and observations, these are complemented by secondary data sources, specifically statistical data, official documents and website material. The chapter begins by setting the context and presents a brief profile of the national park, its community structure and cultural and natural heritage. Section 6.3 then moves on to examine tourism in the Dales. The national park actively promotes 'sustainable tourism' and this section presents data outlining the area's key attractions, accommodation offerings, infrastructure, accessibility and aspects of marketing. Instrumental in the planning and management of tourism is the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA). Their official documents, strategies, survey data and website have therefore been a significant data source throughout this research. Their overall remit and responsibilities are outlined in Section 6.4. The remainder of this section then moves on to discuss the role of other stakeholders in the park and methods of stakeholder engagement and education.

The latter part of the chapter shifts its focus onto the perspectives of stakeholders, with section 6.5 focusing on the key impacts of tourism. The interview respondents reflected a greater propensity towards negative impacts, with only brief mention of the positive effects. This imbalance is reflected in section 6.5, with just one subsection summarising the benefits, with the remainder focused on the negative impacts discussed at greater length by respondents. Finally, section 6.6 moves on to examine different stakeholder interpretations of sustainable tourism development, offering both 'official' definitions such as that presented in the Sustainable Tourism Strategy (YDNPA, 2013a) as well as the individual interpretations and perspectives gleaned from interview respondents.

## 6.2 Park profile

Established in 1954, the Yorkshire Dales was one of the first national parks designated in the UK. The National Park straddles the counties of North Yorkshire and Cumbria, covering an area of 1,762 square km (or 176,653 hectares) in the north of England. The area is characterised by vast swathes of countryside, including more than 20 river valleys (also known as dales) and various dramatic, unique natural features, resulting from centuries of geological history. However, some of the most distinguishing attributes of the area are as a result of man's influence on the landscape. The pasturelands are dissected by long established dry stone walls and field barns as well as various ancient routes, carved out over time by mill workers, miners and farmers, amongst others. The settlements meanwhile contain largely traditional cottages built from local sandstone, gritstone and limestone and form picturesque, characterful hamlets and villages. Figure 6.1 provides an excellent example of this classic Yorkshire Dales landscape.



**Figure 6.1: A traditional Yorkshire Dales village surrounded by pastureland which is divided by dry stone walls**

*©Sarah Murphy*

### **6.2.1 Local communities**

At the time of the last census in 2011, the resident population of the Yorkshire Dales was 19,761, of which 49.7% were male and 50.3% were female inhabitants (ONS, 2013a). Since the last census in 2002, the overall population has increased by 0.2%, with just a 6.8% increase since the 1991 census. However, this still only equates to just 0.1 persons per hectare, representing the lowest population density of all of the England and Wales national parks. Unlike other national parks, such as the Lake District (see Hind & Mitchell, 2004) there are no specific honeypot towns containing significant percentages of the population. Instead, residents are widely distributed throughout the park, with only three settlements having a population greater than 1000: Hawes, Reeth and Sedbergh (YDNPA, 2013a). This has implications on the provision and maintenance of rural amenities and there are some villages which appear to be completely cut off from basic services such as pubs, post offices and shops. Instead, the larger market towns on the fringes of the National Park, such as Skipton, Richmond and Settle, have become hubs offering principal services and employment opportunities. Despite being located outside of the boundaries of the national park, these towns often feature in Yorkshire Dales guide books and websites, primarily because they contain the largest concentration of visitor facilities in the area, including restaurants and accommodation.

The age demographic of communities within the Yorkshire Dales is similar to other National Parks in England and Wales. It has an older age structure than the national average and, as Table 6.1 illustrates, 5,111 residents are 65 years and over, which represents 25.9% of the total population. This has grown from 21% in 2001 and is significantly higher than the national average of 16% (ONS, 2013a).

Age bracket	Number	Percentage
0-10 years	1,536	7.7%
11-20 yrs	2,375	12.0%
21-30 yrs	1,328	6.7%
31-45 yrs	2,895	14.8%
46-60 yrs	4,613	23.3%
61-65 yrs	1,903	9.6%
65 yrs +	5,111	25.9%
Total	19,761	100%

**Table 6.1: Current age structure of the Yorkshire Dales** *(Statistics sourced from ONS, 2013a)*

### 6.2.2 Cultural & natural heritage

The Yorkshire Dales has a long established agricultural history which has shaped the landscape and its communities. The challenging climate and poor soil quality provide an unsuitable environment for arable crop growing and, consequently, livestock farming has very much taken precedence in the area (YDNPA, 2004). Generations of pastoral farming have resulted in man-made features such as dry stone walls, stone built barns, traditional meadows, distinct sheep breeds and cheeses, all of which are acknowledged as internationally important heritage (YDNPA, 2012a). Meanwhile, the natural landscape has also evolved and now primarily consists of peat bogs, hay meadows, hill pastures and heather moorland, providing habitat for various species of wildlife (Countryside Agency, 2003).

The central role of the natural environment and its significance within the Yorkshire Dales' economy was particularly highlighted by the immediate and lasting impacts of the Foot and Mouth crisis in 2001. A report at the height of the crisis, estimated that £19m had been lost in tourism revenues alone between March and June 2001 (LGC, 2001). A large number of agricultural businesses suffered devastating losses as they were forced to put down their livestock whilst other rural businesses experienced declining revenues and were forced to make redundancies (Kemp, 2006). The government distributed a number of Business Recovery Grants to the area, however, these did not stretch to all those affected and as a consequence, a number of

businesses failed. However, for some, the crisis offered the opportunity to diversify their livestock holdings and even change the nature of their business altogether, e.g. by opening farm shops or offering visitor accommodation. Examples of diversified traditional farm holdings can today be seen all over the Yorkshire Dales and Figures 6.2 and 6.3 provide evidence of just two, photographed by the researcher during the observational fieldwork. This increased diversification is thought to have resulted in a change to the structure of farms and one interview respondent noted:

“Some people have moved on to focus on other areas of income. They’ll still farm but mostly they will be more concerned with the tourist or retail side first and just keep a smaller number of animals.” (Respondent YD5)

The latest DEFRA survey showed that whilst the number of livestock holdings had increased by 20.4% to 875 in 2009, the actual livestock numbers had decreased by 18.6% over the 9 year period between 2000 and 2009 (DEFRA, 2010). These statistics appear to add weight to the respondent’s comments and suggest that whilst farms still have livestock, the number of animals reared is declining due to farming becoming a secondary concern.



Figure 6.2: A traditional farm also offering camping facilities ©Sarah Murphy



**Figure 6.3: A traditional farm now also trading as a tearoom and farm shop**  
*@Sarah Murphy*

### **6.3 Tourism**

It is estimated that the Yorkshire Dales attracts more than 12.6 million day visitors and 1.39 million staying visitors each year (YDNPA, 2012a) with an estimated annual visitor spend of £400 million (UKANPA, 2012). Due to the fragmented nature of tourism, it is difficult to determine accurate industry statistics. However, the YDNPA conduct customer surveys on a 5 yearly basis and use the results to help profile the visitors. The latest survey of more than 500 visitors was conducted in the peak summer months of 2008 (YDNPA, 2008). The results of this research are considered to be representative of the wider tourism market and have been used by the Dales Tourism Partnership to inform the latest Sustainable Tourism Strategy (YDNPA, 2013a). The key visitor characteristics noted in the Survey findings were:

- The majority of visitors were day visitors from outside the boundaries of the national park.
- Only 15% of respondents were travelling with children.
- Most visitors were from mature age groups of 45 years and older.

- The average length of stay of overnight visitors was 4.18 nights.
- Over 90% of visitors travelled to the park via car.
- 93% of all visitors had visited the national park before.
- Only 28% of visitors had used the internet as a source of information ahead of their visit.

Whilst acknowledging that the above visitor profile accounts for the majority of the Dales' market, the YDNPA also highlights the importance of improving accessibility for all. In particular, the YDNPA, together with various charities, partake in a number of outreach projects which target new user groups and specifically, individuals in underrepresented demographics. Examples of recent outreach programmes include:

- Go Dales! (YDNPA, 2011)

The project was instigated by the YDNPA in conjunction with Sport England and ran between 2008 and 2011. Its primary aim was to provide young people aged between 8 and 25 with a chance to engage in outdoor experiences in the Yorkshire Dales, develop their understanding of the park and how it can benefit their overall well-being. The project was deemed a success, with participation targets set at the outset of the project exceeded and participants' levels of understanding increased.

- Young Champions (YDNPA, 2012b)

Lottery funding has recently enabled the launch of a new project aimed at 16-25 year olds. It aims to provide 150 young people facing social and/or economic exclusion with the chance to improve their leadership skills and confidence by building a 'Young Champions network'. These champions will then be responsible for hosting events for up to 6000 peers, thus improving the appeal of the national park and helping to promote it as a 'youth friendly' area.

- People & the Dales (YDMT, 2012)

A local charity, the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT) have managed this project since 2009. Its primary aim is to provide disadvantaged and disabled people with the chance to engage with the Yorkshire Dales' environment and participate in new outdoor experiences. Since its induction, the scheme has brought more than

3,500 visitors from disadvantaged backgrounds to the Dales, who might otherwise have never visited.

### **6.3.1 Attractions**

The Yorkshire Dales' main attraction is its natural environment. A significant number of visitors are drawn to the area to enjoy its scenic beauty, peace, tranquillity and open spaces, as indicated within the 2008 Customer Survey responses (YDNPA, 2008). Others opt to partake in outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling, caving, horse-riding, bird watching, climbing and camping. Longer distance outdoor challenges which pass through the area are of increasing popularity and routes such as the Way of the Roses (a 170 mile coast to coast bike ride) and the Pennine Way (a 268 mile walking route) have increased the number of endurance enthusiasts to the Dales. These outdoor pursuits all put to use the area's dramatic landscape and unusual geographical features, including:

- Rock formations – Malham Cove; Gordale Scar
- Caves – White Scar Cave; Ingleborough Cave
- Waterfalls – Aysgarth Falls; Ingleton Falls; Hawdraw Force; Janet's Foss

Alongside these natural attributes, the Yorkshire Dales also has various man-made and cultural attractions which entice people to the area. Natural England (2010) states that the area has 376 scheduled monuments; amongst these are Bolton Priory, Bolton Castle, Fountains Abbey and Skipton Castle. In order to determine other leading cultural attractions, a search was undertaken of the Welcome to Yorkshire (the region's leading marketing organisation) website, various marketing material found within visitor information centres and guide books. These identified the following key attractions:

- Railway experiences – Embsay & Bolton Abbey railway; Settle-Carlisle railway
- Museums – Dales Countryside Museum; Wensleydale Cheese Museum; Yorkshire Dales Mining Museum

- Festivals – Dales Festival of Food & Drink Festival, Yorkshire Dales Outdoor Festival, Yorkshire Dales Walking Festival, Swaledale Festival, Grassington Festival

Amongst its product offering, the YDNPA are also keen to promote the integration of tourism with other industries, to enable the wider economy to benefit from the multiplier effect. For example, many retail outlets stock locally made arts and crafts whilst accommodation and food outlets are encouraged to source their food and drink from local producers. This not only benefits other local industries but can also be used as a marketing tool for the businesses themselves. Alongside this, the YDNPA have included a specific priority in their tourism strategy to increase the number of tourism products which are based on the theme of sheep farming (YDNPA, 2013a).

### **6.3.2 Accommodation**

There are a range of overnight accommodation offerings within the Yorkshire Dales. A significant proportion of these are self catering holiday lets and, due to their nature, it is difficult to establish exactly how many there are, as a large percentage are privately let out. However, in an attempt to conduct some analysis into accommodation facilities, three area specific marketing provider websites were analysed:

- Welcome to Yorkshire – [www.yorkshire.com](http://www.yorkshire.com)
- Yorkshire Dales Online – [www.yorkshiredales.net](http://www.yorkshiredales.net)
- Visit the Yorkshire Dales – [www.visittheyorkshiredales.co.uk](http://www.visittheyorkshiredales.co.uk)

Each website represents a different number of accommodation providers and therefore, to identify the respective importance of each accommodation type, the websites were analysed to calculate the percentage of each category in relation to the overall total. The results of this analysis are given in Table 6.2 below.

	Welcome to Yorkshire	Yorkshire Dales Online	Visit Yorkshire Dales.co.uk
B&Bs	30%	24%	25%
Guesthouses & hotels	12%	17%	24%
Self catering lets/ Cottages	53%	44%	39%
Hostel/Group accommodation	1%	12%	7%
Camping/caravanning	4%	3%	5%

**Table 6.2: Summary of types of accommodation on offer in the Yorkshire Dales**

Despite the absolute figures being very different, the percentages of the different accommodation types clearly show that the majority of offerings are self catering holiday lets, followed by guest houses, hotels and B&Bs. Whilst clusters of accommodation providers are mostly located in the larger villages such as Grassington, accommodation is available right across the Dales, even in more rural, cut off locations.

### **6.3.3 Infrastructure**

The primary form of access to the Yorkshire Dales is via road and around 90% of visitors arrive by car (YDNPA, 2012a). Surrounding the park are major A roads and nearby motorways, providing excellent links to the large northern cities of Manchester, Leeds and Bradford. Within the parks boundaries, the roads reflect the broader rural conditions of the Yorkshire Dales and many are small B roads which are narrow, twisty, and hilly. There is however, a comprehensive public bus network running across the area, offering services between larger towns and villages (e.g. Ingleton to Settle) via popular visitor attractions, such as Fountains Abbey. These routes are extended during the summer season, to provide access from as far afield as Leeds and York and the YDNPA actively encourages visitors to ‘Give the car a break’ and use public transport wherever necessary. To promote this, they advertise the ‘Dales Bus Discount Scheme’, whereby public transport users can benefit from discounts or special offers within selected establishments (Dalesbus, 2012). On the field visit, a sticker advertising participation in this scheme was seen in various windows demonstrating businesses’ support for the scheme.

In a survey conducted in the peak summer months of 2012, DITA (2012) found that over half of all bus users were visitors. Yorkshire Dales businesses estimate that bus routes account for approximately £2.8 million of revenue per year which, if the services were unavailable, would be spent in alternative locations. Yet, despite this, recent years have seen cuts to government spending which have impacted the availability of bus routes, particularly on Sundays and Bank Holidays (YDS, 2012). Given that these are some of the prime visitor times, a local charity has responded by establishing a social enterprise company, the Dales & Bowland Community Interest Company (D&B CIC), to work with stakeholders and provide public transport to areas where services no longer exist. This has proved to be very effective and since 2008, the increased network has seen an expanded ridership of 300%. However, due to the company's charitable status, its long term viability is very much dependent on funding and, given that North Yorkshire County Council have recently announced further proposed cuts to subsidised bus services, this looks set to be an ongoing challenge (NYCC, 2013).

To complement the bus routes and road network, the Dales also has two National Rail services: the Leeds – Morecambe line, running along the southern edge of the park and the Leeds-Settle-Carlisle line, which provides fast and easy access to the western side of park and has also become established as a visitor attraction in its own right (Settle-Carlisle Partnership, 2012).

#### **6.3.4 Accessibility & Rights of Way**

62% of the Yorkshire Dales is open access land, enabling visitors to use it freely for recreational purposes such as walking, cycling and horse riding. In addition, there is a substantial rights of way network, consisting of 1,458km of footpaths, 625km of bridleways and 37km of byways (YDNPA, 2012a). Despite many rights of way crossing private land, the YDNPA develop and maintain the full network as part of their commitment to provide increased access to the landscape for the public. A related objective is included in the park's Management Plan, with one of their specific aims being to improve the 'Ease of Use' of the rights of way for users of all abilities, including wheelchair users and those with sensory disabilities. Actions aimed at achieving this objective are outlined in the 'Public Rights of Way Maintenance Plan' (YDNPA, 2012c)

and include ensuring there is sufficient and effective signposting and maintaining the rights of way structure and surface conditions.

Despite the presence of a substantial rights of way network, the majority of the footpaths cross natural landscape and, outside of villages, there are very few concrete footpaths. The hardening of surfaces as a form of resource adaptation is a key means of visitor management in some protected areas however, in the Yorkshire Dales, laying concrete is rarely an option. Instead, the NPA have a programme of footpath and bridleway maintenance that sees them restore traditional pathways with locally sourced stone to ensure it remains in keeping with the landscape's character. As a consequence, footpath restoration and maintenance can often be a lengthy process, with the replacement of stone being only the first step; the surrounding vegetation which has been eroded away also takes time to naturally repair itself. Examples of repair and maintenance projects detailed on the YDNPA website include:

- Bridleway 516029 – the original track was very damaged due to long term vehicular use and there was a significant amount of standing water. Work involved repairing side ditches, cross drains and levelling the ruts. The NPA have now forbidden the use of recreational vehicles and, following consultation with landowners using the bridleway for access, the use of large agricultural vehicles is to be kept to a minimum.
- Simon's Seat – path restoration works involved the use of 35 tonnes of reclaimed mill floor which was laid to create over 100 metres of new flagged path between two rock outcrops.
- Wether Fell Bridleway – the bridleway suffered significant surface water erosion due to poor drainage. The repair works involved the installation of stone cut drains, new side ditches and the replacement of timber gates to improve access for walkers, horse riders and cyclists in particular.

### **6.3.5 Marketing**

The sheer volume of marketing material available in relation to the Yorkshire Dales is overwhelming. A simple Google search of 'Yorkshire Dales Tourist Information' reveals

over 114,000 entries. The first few search result pages provide links to the larger marketing organisation websites – Welcome to Yorkshire, the YDNPA, the Yorkshire Dales Society and IKnow-Yorkshire *inter alia*. However, beyond this, are the websites of smaller tourism providers; individual attractions, accommodation providers and community interest group pages. Whilst it was not possible to look at every website in great depth, a large number were examined to ascertain the general tone of the marketing material and identify common messages being communicated.

The Yorkshire Dales is widely marketed as a ‘sustainable tourism destination’. A large number of stakeholders use either the ‘sustainable tourism’ label or an alternative such as ‘green’ or ‘responsible’ tourism. Along side this, ‘green’ imagery is strongly represented in promotional materials. This is not particularly surprising given that many of the tourism activities and products on offer in the park revolve around the landscape.

### ***Accreditations & Advertising***

The Business Survey conducted by the YDNPA revealed that the most popular membership/accreditation scheme amongst businesses in the Yorkshire Dales was the ‘Welcome to Yorkshire’ (WtY) membership (YDNPA, 2012d). This is a paid membership scheme offering tourism businesses the chance to subscribe to regional marketing services and support (WtY, 2012). WtY supports the development of a regional brand and actively engages in both regional and national advertising campaigns, including sponsorship of the ITV documentary, ‘The Dales’. In becoming a member, businesses can benefit from their association with the WtY brand, utilising advertising space on their website and having access to their training and network services.

During the field visits, the WtY logo was seen in a considerable number of establishment windows and on promotional materials. Whilst most interview respondents viewed the membership scheme as beneficial due to the above noted benefits, others were not so pleased with the cost of the marketing and considered it an unnecessary expense when there was opportunity for them to participate in other, free networks and partnerships such as the Dales Tourism Network. However, on the whole, when compared with other accreditation and membership schemes, it was

deemed to be most beneficial to businesses. Other schemes such as the 'Green Business Scheme' were viewed less favourably. Whilst they help to communicate a business' ideals to their customers and show their commitment to sustainability initiatives, they place unnecessary financial pressure on businesses to 'tick boxes'. Consequently, the YDNPA no longer actively encourage membership of this scheme as they feel the criteria is too bureaucratic and costly for many of the Dales small tourism businesses. Instead, they believe it is more beneficial to:

“point [*businesses*] in the direction of ways to become more sustainable in the green sense....and the masses of information there is available in public, now there is such a lot of it that there's no real excuse and its not difficult to find”.

(Respondent YD7)

### ***Europarc Federation's Charter for Sustainable Tourism***

In 2008, the Yorkshire Dales was awarded the Charter for Sustainable Tourism by the Europarc Federation, a pan-European organisation with over 400 members. The status recognises the Yorkshire Dales' ability to meet a series of required standards relating to sustainable tourism development (YDNPA, 2012a). In effect, the Charter provides a practical management framework which ensures that adequate consideration is given to the area's social, environmental and economic needs (EUROPARC, 2012). It also provides the Dales with a valuable opportunity to engage with other international national parks and learn from 'best practice'. As a marketing tool, the Charter status is an internationally recognised award and is a clear way of communicating the Yorkshire Dales' commitment to sustainable tourism development to a range of stakeholders.

### ***Distinctly Dales***

In 2011/12, the YDNPA commissioned a project to produce a practical handbook for tourism businesses which explains how the area's local distinctiveness can be used to help market their business. Primarily, businesses were encouraged to convey the sense of place by providing greater detail about its unique, special qualities. The aim was to not only encourage more visitors, but the 'right kind of visitor' and to increase their length of stay and level of spend (YDNPA, 2013d). The project also promotes greater collaboration amongst businesses in the same localities, encouraging them to

communicate a harmonious message to visitors and, in some instances, engage in joint promotional activities.

#### **6.4 Managing the Yorkshire Dales**

The objectives of UK National Parks were originally outlined in the National Parks and Countryside Act (1949) and subsequently revised under the Environment Act (1995). Today, the statutory purposes are to:

- “Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and
- Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks by the Public”

In achieving this, they also have a duty to:

- “seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities within the National Park” (UKANPA, 2012)

The Environment Act (1995) also created the National Park Authority entities which exist today within the local government structure. The YDNPA has responsibility for planning and management and a statutory obligation to produce a strategic Management Plan outlining the park’s overall vision. Their primary source of funding comes from the government and, although they are independent from local Councils, in some aspects, their respective remits are relatively similar. For example, the NPA are the appointed planning and highways authority for the area and are responsible for open access and rights of way. From a specific tourism stance, the YDNPA have a Tourism Team on their staff who take the lead in producing an area specific tourism strategy, provide assistance and support to local tourism businesses and work with stakeholders to promote the area and encourage responsible tourism practices.

Respondents interviewed were generally supportive of the national park structure, perceiving it to be instrumental in maintaining the special and unique natural qualities of the area, especially from a conservation perspective. However, a number of respondents, particularly residents and tourism businesses, noted its restrictive nature due to the protected area status. Some people thought that the national park structure

merely added another layer of authority which was confusing to residents and businesses. Indeed, it was commented that making changes in the park is incredibly difficult due to the highly regulated environment. Businesses wishing to change the appearance of their buildings often come up against opposition or are forced to engage in lengthy planning applications and procedures. This is even the case with regards to the implementation of more sustainable energy sources. Whilst nationally there is a push for more environmentally sensitive practices, one resident noted:

“There are a few people I know who have been refused permission for solar panels on their roofs which is ridiculous. One minute they’re telling us to be environmentally friendly and the next they stop you doing what will help you achieve that! They just send out mixed messages all the time.”

(Respondent YD14)

Areas with designated conservation status are subject to more onerous planning restrictions and examples of refused permissions for solar panels and wind turbines are relatively common. However, businesses wishing to change their land use also face difficulties even when their proposed changes are in keeping with the landscape. A key example of this is the development of small scale campsites. One respondent interviewed was a representative from the National Trust works closely with landowners to ensure their business proposals are sustainable. Yet, despite providing sound advice and guidance, historically, some proposals have still been refused. He did however note that the attitude of the NPA was changing and he was hopeful that future restrictions might be relaxed and proposed developments would be viewed more favourably.

Other respondents however stressed the supportiveness of the YDNPA in relation to tourism development generally, stating their restrictiveness only really extended to issues of planning. However, this may limit the number of new businesses opening in the Dales or even the expansion or diversification plans of existing businesses. A need for change going forward was also reflected by another respondent, who suggested that one of the key drawbacks of the national park generally was that it provided protection for the park in its current state. She noted however that:

“they need to move with the times. Preserving it as it is, they are preserving a period of time. There needs to be movement, a look towards the future. Take energy use. Most houses in the Dales are stone built and cannot be insulated properly. If there are to be preserved, something needs to be done –legislation needs to be relaxed to make the planning systems more forward thinking.”

(Respondent YD12)

#### **6.4.1 Key stakeholders**

Most stakeholders interviewed regarded the YDNPA as the ‘backbone’ to the Yorkshire Dales. However, it was also acknowledged that they work with a substantial number of stakeholders to effectively plan, manage and monitor tourism. An initial stakeholder analysis was conducted prior to the data collection phase of this research and is included in Chapter 5 of this thesis. At this stage, its primary purpose was to identify potential interview respondents for the primary data collection. On the whole, the initial analysis appears to have been relatively comprehensive and includes all relevant stakeholder groups. However, the analysis has been revisited to add further depth and description to the key groupings as follows:

- **Councils:**

There are 2 County Councils, 3 District Councils and 83 Parish Councils with administrative responsibilities in the Yorkshire Dales. As public organisations, they all have their own individual objectives which are in line with their primary responsibilities. These are summarised in key policy and strategy documents. The Councils have representatives on many of the NPA’s steering groups and committees and contribute to the development of key strategies to ensure they are congruent with wider district and county aims and objectives.

- **Residents & Community Groups:**

There are nearly 20,000 residents living within the Yorkshire Dales and significantly more in the market towns and villages on the park boundaries. Tourists often interact directly with residents whilst they are in the Dales and it is therefore important to minimise any negative impacts of tourism and diminish any hostilities so that tourism experiences are not tainted. Some

villages have established community groups (e.g. Malhamdale) that aim to develop a more sustainable lifestyle. Whilst their initiatives are aimed at improving their wider prospects, many of them have a heavy tourism focus and aim to showcase local businesses and places of interests.

- **Tourism businesses:**

The majority of tourism businesses in the Dales are small, owner managed businesses or micro-businesses. They have a very high interest in tourism planning and development and a large number are members of the Dales Tourism Network, a voluntary organisation which helps tourism businesses work together to market the area. For many, their primary interest is in increasing tourism revenues however, they also have a vested interest in developing sustainable practices to ensure the industry's long-term survival.

- **Landowners/Farmers:**

Many of the landowners are farmers who grant access and rights of way over their land for visitor use. Much like other residents, many have direct contact with tourists and are affected by the social and environmental impacts of the industry. Additionally, tourism many provide income for landowners and farmers if, for example, they receive stewardship grants for granting access.

- **Charities:**

Charities such as Natural England, the National Trust, the YDMT and Woodland Trust sit on the NPA's various committees. Whilst they all have their own agendas and priorities, they are committed to the NPA's overall goals of conservation and sustainable development. Some charities have a direct involvement in the provision of tourism, for example, the National Trust manages the Malham Tarn estate whilst Natural England maintains the Pennine Way. Other charities provide assistance to residents and all sorts of businesses in the area and, whilst they may not have a direct involvement in tourism, they recognise the importance of the industry to the area and the far-reaching impacts it has on communities and the environment.

- **Regional tourism organisations:**

The two regional tourism organisations are Cumbria Tourism and Welcome to Yorkshire. Their primary objective is to market their respective regions, which includes areas of the national park. They both sit on the tourism steering committee and play a fundamental role in marketing the area as a sustainable destination.

- **Extended stakeholders:**

Some stakeholders extend beyond the park boundaries yet still have an interest in tourism development in the Dales. These include the national tourism body Visit Britain, the DCMS, UKANPA, the Europarc Federation and other national parks and protected areas. The NPA considers the needs of these wider organisations within their tourism development plans to ensure their overall objectives do not conflict with those outlined nationally, regionally or in nearby locations.

- **Visitors:**

Visitors are the very heart of the Yorkshire Dales' tourism industry. With an estimated 9.5million tourists (UKANPA, 2012) a year, many of whom are repeat visitors, it is important that they have a high quality experience. Equally however, visitors also need to behave appropriately to minimise any negative social and environmental impacts. Thus, whilst they often have little direct involvement in policy formulation, their behaviour and demographic data are fundamental in shaping tourism planning and management strategies.

#### **6.4.2 Strategies & Policies**

The YDNPA are responsible for producing a significant number of strategies and policies, and a summary of the relevant key documents is provided below, with brief comments on the main objectives outlined therein. It should be noted that many of these were in varying stages of consultation throughout the duration of this research. Where this is the case, an evaluation of only the most recent document has been

included below (unless stated otherwise) however *all* relevant documents have been reviewed as part of the research process.

***Yorkshire Dales Management Plan 2013-18 (YDNPA, 2013b)***

As noted in 6.4 above, the YDNPA has a statutory obligation to produce a broad scale management plan which outlines the long term vision and strategic policies for the area. It is produced following extensive consultation with key partners and stakeholders and provides a number of objectives and guiding principles which are intended to direct stakeholders in their actions over the next 5 to 10 years. The plan clearly states the requirement to consider the document as a whole rather than section by section and, in doing so, stresses the need for an integrated planning and management approach. Whilst not specifically targeting the tourism industry, the plan's objectives underpin all activities in the park and therefore elements are echoed in other, industry specific strategies including the tourism strategy.

***Corporate Plan 2013/14 (YDNPA, 2013c)***

The Corporate Plan is an annually produced document which sets out the direction for the National Park Authority itself. The document identifies the key priorities for the upcoming year and outlines the proposed budget. It then also summarises the authority's other key responsibilities, programmes and management requirements by presenting objectives and related actions for the coming year. On the whole, the objectives outlined are quite vague and relatively high level, however the more specific actions are mapped against a time plan and identify the individual within the YDNPA charged with delivery. Of particular relevance are the objectives directly relating to sustainable tourism development and the promotion of the Dales. However, many of the other objectives also cover issues which underpin the tourism industry in some form, examples include traffic management, meeting conservation targets and widening accessibility.

***The Yorkshire Dales Local Plan 2006 (YDNPA, 2009)***

The Local Plan is a longer term strategy, spanning a decade. Whilst the plan was adopted in 2006, it underwent a comprehensive review in 2009 which resulted in a number of policies being amended or removed. The primary aim of the local plan is to

document the policies controlling planning proposals for development and use of the land and buildings in the area. This is particularly relevant for tourism businesses, landowners and residents as the protected area status means that not only are they subject to Council planning regulations, but also the restrictions of the National Park status. Development of the plan involves a consultation process, whereby members of the public can raise concerns surrounding appropriate land use, for example, the current public consultation has highlighted some concern over the number of barns converted and sold as second homes (YDNPA, 2013d).

***Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2013-2018 (YDNPA, 2013a)***

This document was produced by the Dales Tourism Partnership following extensive consultation with stakeholders and following the area's achievement of the Europarc Federation's Charter for Sustainable Tourism in 2008. The main aim of the document is to "identify the key themes and priorities for managing, developing and marketing tourism in the Yorkshire Dales area"(p.9). The bulk of the document appears to provide background information on tourism in the Dales before outlining the wider issues impacting the tourism industry generally. Of the 74 page strategy, only 20 of these actually focus on the strategic aims, objectives and action plan going forward. Analysing these, the strategy appears to be a relatively high level document, providing generic aims and objectives which are underpinned by more specific SMART actions.

***Special Qualities, Special Experiences (YDNPA, 2010)***

To complement the Sustainable Tourism Strategy, the YDNPA also have an integrated Visitor Management strategy. Spanning 99 pages, it is a very comprehensive document which provides considerable detail about the benefits tourism contributes to the Dales whilst also noting the potential negative impacts associated with the industry. Whilst it too is heavily contextual, it clearly identifies where improvements are needed and the actions to be taken to achieve this, mapping them as 'guiding principles' in relevant sections throughout the document. In particular, the strategy gives regard to issues to spatial distribution and specific visitor management issues and the necessary actions required to meet objectives.

***Other strategies and policies***

Whilst many stakeholders will likely view strategies and policies in relative isolation, it is important to note their importance within the wider context of the national park and society as a whole. As illustrated in Figure 6.4, the YDNPA's strategies all 'feed into each other' to some extent, as they all strive to achieve the park's overall vision. None of the strategies are prepared in isolation; instead, they all give due consideration to other policies in existence, both internally and externally at local, regional and national levels. For this reason, some objectives will appear in multiple strategies. This approach helps to illustrate the integrated nature of the park system as a whole. Furthermore, YDNPA's strategies also need to consider how their strategies fit with those in broader society, e.g. with the local Council's priorities. To minimise conflict and ensure goals are congruent, the YDNPA acknowledge that their strategies need to incorporate a multitude of stakeholder views and priorities and thus strategy development involves a rigorous consultation process.

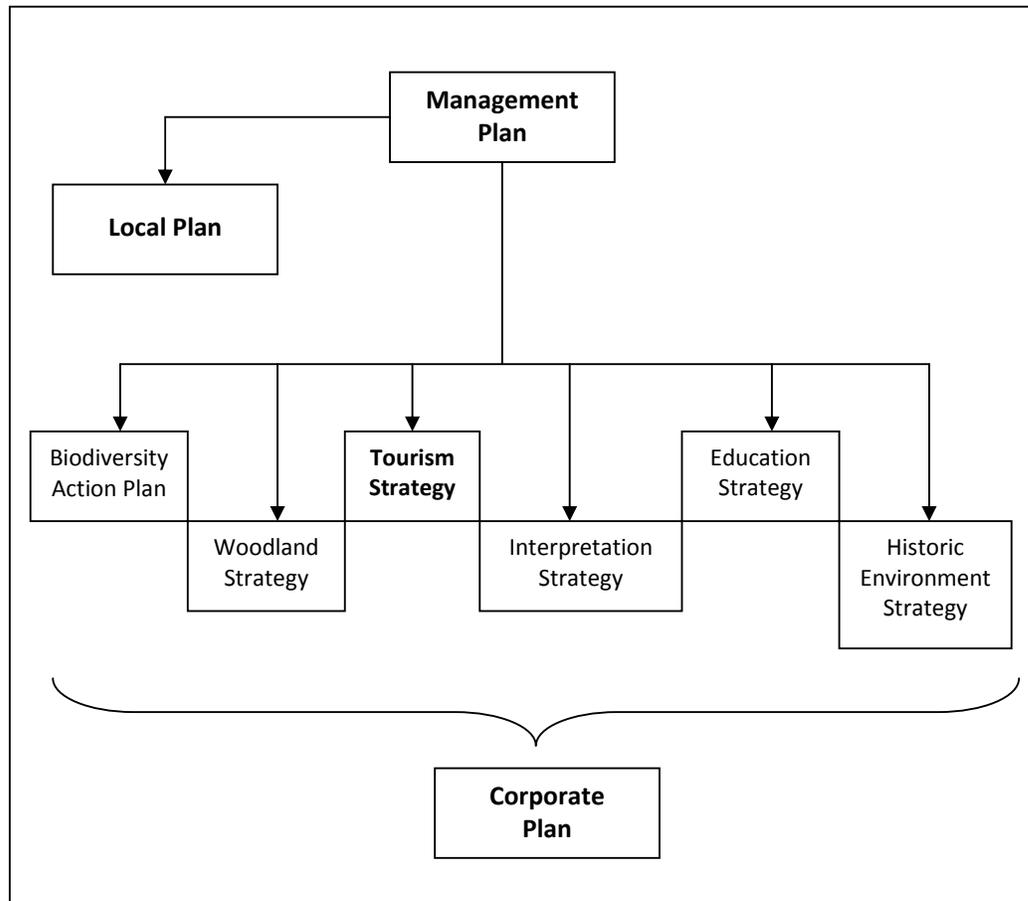


Figure 6.4: The relationship between key strategies (Adapted from YDNPA, 2010: p.15)

### ***Usefulness of strategies & policies***

The interview respondents were asked to comment on the perceived usefulness of the policies. Not surprisingly, the responses varied between those who were involved in the strategy preparation and thus, made use of it as a point of reference and those who saw it as a 'box ticking' exercise. Some of the respondents falling into this latter category commented that sometimes the strategies could be relatively restrictive whilst others, particularly the smaller tourism businesses, did not see the benefit of such documents. One individual stated:

“To be honest, I know they’re there and I have a quick glance at them when they’re first published but they’re not something I go back to and use when I’m planning the future of our business. Our business is only small and we already

have a good idea of where we're heading and how achievable it is so I just don't think that they are a lot of use to us." (Respondent YD9)

However, representatives from larger organisations and charities thought that the NPA documents were useful when developing their own internal strategies as they could help to identify projects which would be mutually beneficial and develop objectives which would not contradict the broader area objectives. Furthermore, as the strategies often underpinned the development of the industry at a general level, they were deemed to be useful in helping to present a unified, congruent tourism industry within the Dales.

### **6.4.3 Stakeholder engagement**

The YDNPA try to involve as many stakeholders as possible in tourism planning and management. On the whole, communities and businesses often receive this positively and are keen to engage with the authority on key decisions and policy formation. The following sections provide some insight into the engagement methods used by the NPA. It is important however to remember that the method used will vary according to the stakeholder group the NPA are trying to involve and the overall aims and objectives of the individual project or task.

#### ***Consultation***

The development of all major policies, plans and strategies go through a process of public consultation. As the Tourism Strategy has recently been updated, the consultation process undertaken for this revision has been reviewed and discussed with key stakeholders. On the whole, it was perceived to be very comprehensive, with stakeholders given ample opportunity to participate and interact. The main elements of the process involved workshops, discussions, one to one engagement, email and telephone consultations and surveys. Key dates and deadlines were communicated via the website, the National Park Centres and media notifications.

On a more general note, the tourism businesses and professionals interviewed commented that they normally felt able to engage with consultation processes.

However, one resident felt there was sometimes too much consultation and, particularly over the last couple of years, there had been a large number of meetings as the structure of the NPA and its policies had all been reviewed. As a consequence, perhaps of 'consultation fatigue', she had stopped participating personally with the process, however she did acknowledge that she had been aware of what was happening and thus, had had sufficient opportunity to participate should she have wished to.

It was noted by some that the level of engagement from residents varied according to two primary factors: their location and length of residency. In relation to location, those in areas with larger visitor numbers and a higher density of tourism businesses were perceived to be more likely to involve themselves in the planning and management practices as the decisions made will directly impact them and their livelihoods. In relation to the second point, the length of residency, it was noted that 'newer' residents, perhaps who had retired to the Dales or owned second homes there, were not as keen to involve themselves in matters of planning and management. It was suggested that this was because they had not experienced the industry for long enough and therefore could not fully appreciate the impact it has on the communities and their way of life.

### ***Partnerships***

In 2010, the YDNPA and Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAONB) together formed the Dales Tourism Partnership. The Partnership works with other tourism businesses and key stakeholders to develop and promote a 'shared vision' for tourism in the Dales. In particular, they have been responsible for the consultation processes and subsequent production of the revised tourism strategy (YDNPA, 2013a). They also organise events which encourage collaboration amongst tourism businesses and the development of a unified 'Yorkshire Dales' brand. The most recent event held was a tourism forum intended to help businesses share working practices and increase visitor trade (Craven Herald & Pioneer, 2013a).

The NPA also work in partnership with a variety of landowners, charities and local businesses. The most notable are:

- **YDMT** – a charity responsible for administering the NPA's Sustainable Development Fund. YDMT support programmes which directly contribute to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the national park and help contribute to the broader aims of sustainable development.
- **D&B CIC** – a community initiative responsible for the provision of public transport to areas of the Dales where public bus services no longer exist.
- **Dales Tourism Network** – a free, informal network of tourism businesses in and around the Yorkshire Dales, who work together to promote the industry, learn from 'best practice' and boost tourism revenues.

The interview respondents noted that the NPA provided a large number of opportunities for collaborative working with other tourism businesses. However, a couple did raise concerns surrounding the lack of agreement amongst stakeholders (e.g. in relation to who should and should not be allowed to participate in the Partnerships) and the extent to which they could be perceived as a beneficial investment of time and resources.

### ***Volunteers***

As well as encouraging them to offer opinions, the YDNPA also offer opportunities for communities to participate in volunteer projects. In 2011/12, the YDNPA's 'Dales Volunteers' created approximately 5,700 volunteer days offering a range of roles; from visitor facing roles such as being walking guides or giving educational demonstrations, to practical maintenance work on conservation projects. These opportunities enable communities to directly engage with both visitors and the landscape, providing the chance for them to communicate their passion for the area and contribute towards its conservation.

### ***Payback Schemes***

A key means of engaging with visitors and encouraging them to participate in the ongoing conservation of the Yorkshire Dales is through their participation in Payback Schemes. The YDNPA supports various payback schemes, notably:

- Friends of the Three Peaks – 'Friends' can subscribe to an annual membership fee of at least £10, purchase merchandise or undertake fundraising activities.

The money raised is spent on specific conservation projects co-ordinated by the YDNPA, including the maintenance of the paths on the three Peaks at Pen-y-ghent, Ingleborough and Wharfedale.

- Donate to the Dales –Visitors are encouraged to make a donation to the YDMT, the charity charged with delivering and supporting the national park's sustainable development grant. Alternatively, the YDMT also have a 'Dedicate a tree' scheme where visitors can pay £10 to enable the planting of a broadleaf tree within the Yorkshire Dales. To date, this scheme has resulted in the planting of over 1 million trees, contributing significantly to the Dales Woodland Restoration programme (YDMT, 2012)

#### **6.4.4 Educating Visitors**

When discussing the impacts of tourism, one respondent noted that she thought the main cause of the negative impacts were irresponsible behaviour, which ultimately stems from visitors failure to recognise that the Yorkshire Dales is not a 'park' at all, but that it is in fact a living environment owned by private landowners. She suggested that some, not all, prioritised their enjoyment above everything else and thus failed to respect the landscape which they were visiting, resulting in irresponsible behaviour; littering, repeated trampling, parking on verges and wildlife disturbance *inter alia*. Many respondents acknowledged that overcoming this issue requires visitor education, to highlight the implications of their behaviour and encourage them to take responsibility for their actions. The YDNPA provide education through two primary means: communicating their interpretation of a Code of Conduct and using interpretation methods within National Park Centres.

#### ***Codes of Conduct & the Countryside Code***

Whilst the YDNPA and other stakeholders can educate visitors, ultimately the responsibility for their behaviour remains their own. The NPA display advice on how to be a 'green visitor' and abide by the Countryside Code on both their website and on notice boards around the national park itself. Essentially, these read as lists of behavioural 'dos and don'ts' to maximise visitor experiences and ensure the long term

survival of the environment and related communities. The extent to which these are read by visitors is somewhat debatable however. During the observation phase of this research, the researcher engaged individuals in conversation within the National Park Centres. None of the individuals spoken to had been on the YDNPA website and, within the Centre, very few had looked at the informational boards where these Codes were displayed.

### ***Interpretation & National Park Centres***

There are five National Park Centres located in Grassington (shown in Figure 6.5), Malham, Aysgarth Falls, Hawes and Reeth. Here, visitors are able to buy local produce, obtain visitor information (e.g. accommodation, transport, attractions), learn about the work of the NPA and explore the culture and natural resources of the Yorkshire Dales. Each of the National Park Centres was visited during the course of the data collection and approximately 30 - 60 minutes was spent in each. During this time, the footfall from visitors was high and the staff were clearly knowledgeable about the area. A large variety of promotional material was available and there were prominent displays providing education about the history, geology and culture of the area together with details of the YDNPA's work and upcoming consultation meetings.



**Figure 6.5: National Park Centre in Grassington**

***©Sarah Murphy***

The YDNPA work with a large number of stakeholders to deliver a variety of interpretation in various formats, the most common being printed material, exhibitions and interpretation panels such as that seen in Figure 6.6. These panels are located around the national park, mostly near car parks and rights of way which have a relatively high footfall. The NPA state that their primary purpose is to develop visitors' appreciation for the area by communicating the special qualities of the national park. The board's observed all contained information about the local geology, wildlife and vegetation and, in doing so, clearly conveyed the unique characteristics of the locality. One visitor interviewed also commented:

“Some of the [*interpretation*] boards can be quite useful to orientate yourself but mostly they're just a good way to find out about different animal and bird species and the geological features.” (Respondent YD17)

As well as communicating key values to visitors, interpretation methods are also a visitor management technique aimed at altering visitor behaviour. Some of the interpretation panels and documentation within the National Park Centre included details of the Countryside Code and other expected visitor behaviours, e.g. litter and dog fouling. This interpretation clearly intends to encourage visitors to take responsibility for their actions and thus, seems to be adequately serving its purpose.



Figure 6.6: Interpretation board in the Yorkshire Dales @Sarah Murphy

## 6.5 Tourism impacts

The impacts of tourism are well documented by the YDNPA within strategies and on their website. However, in these circumstances, they are offered from a very perfunctory perspective and it is difficult to glean their relative importance from different stakeholder perspectives. In order to add this depth to the findings, the interview respondents were asked to comment on the primary impacts which were important to them and explain the direct effect they have on their day to day lives.

### 6.5.1 Benefits

Although official documentation always includes justification for tourism in the area due to the positive impacts it brings, discussions with respondents focused heavily on negative aspects with only a few respondents noting any upside. Primarily, the benefits

were articulated by professionals working in the industry. Whilst, the interviews with residents indirectly alluded to some benefits (e.g. the income potential) none categorically recognised this as an impact of the industry.

Generic benefits noted included the industry's monetary contribution to the local economy and the provision of employment opportunities. However, some tourism professionals also noted that a significant positive impact was the increased accessibility to the park which tourism helped to create. For example, the considerable right of way network which is maintained and improved by the YDNPA. There are also various facilities (car parks, toilets, shops) which are primarily provided for visitors but can also be utilised by local residents. One respondent did note however that:

“There are some excellent facilities but I think for some residents there is a bit of a mind block, where they think these things are only for tourists. Residents need to be made to feel that they can use these things and take advantage of what's there.”  
(Respondent YD10)

Another key benefit noted, primarily by the tourism professionals, was the increased focus on environmental conservation amongst visitors and tourism businesses. Furthermore, whilst there are inevitable environmental consequences of tourism (as will be discussed in greater detail below) the income can be used to fund environmental projects and raise awareness about the importance of conservation within the park boundaries. A prime example of this is through visitor payback schemes such as the 'Dedicate a tree' scheme managed by YDMT and described in Section 6.4.3 above.

### **6.5.2 Loss of community**

Whilst different stakeholder groups highlighted varying issues, many of these contributed to the overriding concern of a loss of community and identity within the Dales villages. One respondent commented that she thought the area was in danger of becoming a 'retirement community' stating:

“...there is a risk that rural areas may disappear completely with no communities in any sense. The rural areas are becoming full of retired people and if we’re not careful, that’s what they will become – retirement communities, not generating anything or providing any significant contribution to the economy.” (Respondent YD12)

She further commented that this phenomenon was exacerbated by two aspects: low wages and lack of affordable housing. The first point stems from the overwhelming domination of agriculture and tourism which together account for over 37% of all employment in the area (YDNPA, 2013a). Neither of these industries is considered well paid and, tourism specifically, is largely still associated with low wages, seasonality issues and unpredictability. The average annual salary in the Yorkshire Dales is currently below £20,000 (Yorkshire Post, 2013), which is markedly lower than the national average of £26,500 (ONS, 2013b). As a result, the younger residents who do not naturally progress to work on family farms, tend to move away to seek better prospects and alternative career options. This is primarily due to:

“...lack of options. Take tourism for example. As an industry, it needs to adapt, to be seen as a career option rather than just a job. But this requires broader change and I’m not sure how easy that is. The industry as a whole needs to become better paid and whether this could be achieved in rural locations, is debatable. However you look at it though, there is a need to retain youngsters otherwise everything with die out”. (Respondent YD12)

However, even when opportunities arise, the issue regarding affordable housing becomes a barrier for businesses and local communities. The Wensleydale Creamery recently announced a plan to invest in a multi-million pound factory development in Hawes creating numerous employment opportunities. However, the business has experienced difficulties recruiting and maintaining individuals due to the lack of affordable accommodation for the staff in the local area (Yorkshire Post, 2013).

Most respondents noted that the biggest issue relating to housing is the significant proportion of holiday lettings and second homes in the park. Whilst there are 11,254

households within the national park, 2,453 of these have no usual residents and thus are deemed to largely represent second homes or holiday lets (ONS, 2013a). This represents 21.8% of the residential properties in the Yorkshire Dales and has increased from 18.4% in the 2001 census. Crucially however, it is significantly greater than the national average of 4.4%. Respondents thought that the area's popularity as a tourism destination was fuelling the demand for properties; pushing house prices up and in turn, pricing younger generations out of the market. Indeed, with average house prices now being approximately £240,000 (YDNPA, 2012a) there is noticeable disproportion between the high cost of housing and low average salary.

The high proportion of second home and holiday lets is having a significant impact on the communities, particularly in winter, when many properties are left empty. One resident commented:

“There are a few houses in the village which are rented to tourists as holiday homes and in the summer, it makes it really lively; lots of walkers, families, children, dogs. But in the winter, when the weather's bad and the dark nights are here, those houses are just dark and empty most of the time. It's a shame because it can feel quite deserted and like there's no life here.”

(Respondent YD15)

Whilst another noted that:

“It should be community, not just a place to commute from.”

(Respondent YD16)

In addition, the lack of permanent residents in some areas of the Dales is resulting in the closure of rural services which are fundamental to the communities living there. Whilst this was specifically stressed by resident respondents, it is also a key concern of the YDNPA, the charities in the region and tourism businesses, one of whom stated:

“It is worrying that the villages are losing their services, it's not good for locals or businesses, particularly us, trying to let properties. People don't often want to be completely cut off - they want a pub and shop to hand. Without those, we're at risk of customers taking their business elsewhere.”

(Respondent, YD9)

In this sense, the provision of holiday accommodation is detracting from the community feel – one of the very things which attracts people to the area in the first place. Thus, in providing tourism facilities and services, the industry is in effect, destroying itself.

### **6.5.3 Traffic related issues**

The most common impacts noted related to traffic, with one of the biggest issues being congestion. During the summer months and particularly at weekends and on bank holidays, visitor numbers peak in the Dales. At these times, traffic can queue for extended periods, particularly around the busier sites such as Malham and Grassington. Visitors noted that this was not only a hindrance but also a deterrent to visiting the area as it meant time was wasted stuck in traffic jams when they could be elsewhere enjoying themselves. Businesses and residents also noted this to be a problem however they considered congestion to be a secondary issue when compared to parking. There are car parking facilities at the National Park Centres and at various rural locations across the park. However, at peak times, often these lack the required capacity and residents have noted that some visitors therefore resort to parking wherever they find space – on verges, outside homes, even across driveways. These latter instances cause significant inconvenience to residents, who may become trapped in their driveways and cannot go about their daily lives as they wish. For other visitors who opt to park on verges, their actions lead to environmental degradation, as the verges (and sometimes other nearby vegetation) are destroyed by trampling and human interference. Figure 6.7 provides a prime example of this behaviour, where cars can be seen parked on verges leading out of the village of Malham.



**Figure 6.7: Cars parked on grass verges on the road leading out of Malham**  
**©Sarah Murphy**

In addition, many stakeholders also noted the issue of dangerous driving within the Dales. As stated above in section 6.3.3, the majority of roads in the Yorkshire Dales are narrow and twisty and in some instances this leads to poor visibility for drivers. It was noted amongst visitors, business owners and residents that there are a significant number of drivers who do not take the required due care which, in turn, was leading to increased incidence of accident and injury, both amongst people and animals. One livestock farmer stated that:

“Sometimes people just bomb around the corners and they’re not bothered what’s round there. The roads aren’t particularly good and you have to drive slowly, they’re not the type of roads you can do 60 at everywhere. Even if you live here and you know the bends, they’re still dangerous, not just for the drivers but walkers and animals too. People have hit my sheep before and just driven off - it’s not often but if people were more careful it wouldn’t happen at all.”

(Respondent YD5)

Related to this, is also the heightened noise and air pollution associated with vehicles being driven at speed; a point noted by the Yorkshire Dales Society on their website (YDS, 2012).

#### **6.5.4 Overcrowding**

Aside from the congestion on the roads, respondents also considered overcrowding of villages and rural locations to be a significant issue. As stated in section 6.3, one of the primary attractions of the area is its tranquil and peaceful nature however the rise in visitor numbers during busy periods can transform the landscape entirely. Two respondents, both visitors to the Yorkshire Dales, independently noted:

“We come to get away from the bustle of the city, to have some peace and quiet and see a bit of green. Generally, we avoid coming at weekends and in the summer holidays because it’s so busy and you can never find anywhere free to have a coffee or a bite to eat or even park your car. When it’s like that, instead of escaping, it feels like you’ve brought half the world with you.”

(Respondent YD18)

“It feels like there's more people coming [*here*] than there used to be which is a bit of a shame really. We go off hiking and we used to go for hours hardly seeing anyone and now there's always others around. I miss the feeling of being cut off from things like we used to get.”

(Respondent YD17)

The observational visit to the Yorkshire Dales was not conducted over a bank holiday but it did span weekends and school holidays. The honeypot sites in particular, became very congested at this time and the tourism facilities and services clearly became stretched. Even in areas where there was the greatest concentration of hospitality services, the demand for these was high and queues were forming. However, these appeared to peak and trough throughout the course of the day, approximately in line with meal times. Figure 6.8 shows a photo taken in Grassington at 4pm. This was outside of the peak eating hours yet it is still possible to see that the cafés to the right of the picture are full and there is a strong footfall through the centre of the village. Whilst this means that visitors are spending money and contributing to the economy,

such busyness does not just hamper the visitor experience, but can also have a detrimental impact on local residents trying to go about their daily lives. This issue was raised by one resident, who stated:

“It gets a bit annoying sometimes. I know that we need tourists for the town to survive and I know they bring money and jobs and all that. But sometimes, when it’s a Saturday morning and you just need a pint of milk, its infuriating when you can’t get through the village for tourists, then when you do, you’re having to queue for 20 odd minutes whilst they dilly dally around!”

(Respondent YD16)

This quote highlights another issue relating to overcrowding – that it can lead to increased hostilities between visitors and host communities. This is most prevalent amongst communities who are not directly involved in tourism and thus, do not perceive any benefit from visitors’ presence.



Figure 6.8: A busy street on an afternoon in Grassington, June 2012 ©Sarah Murphy

### **6.5.5 Erosion & wildlife disturbance**

The issue of erosion is related to both overcrowding and traffic problems however many stakeholders highlighted it as a separate issue and, on this basis, it warrants its own subsection. The main source of erosion noted was that caused by trampling and particularly individuals utilising the same routes through wild terrain and countryside. Over 62% of the Yorkshire Dales is 'open country' and registered common land which means that area is freely available to members of the public (YDNPA, 2010). In addition, the substantial right of way network provides visitors with specific designated routes which thousands of individuals use each year. Examples include the Dales Way (approx. 3000 people), the Penine Way (approx 5000) and the Coast to Coast route (approx 7000). With the sheer volume of footfall, especially on the routes formally mapped out, there is significant wear and tear on the ground. Over time, this inevitably becomes muddy, resulting in a widened pathway as the trampling extends.

In some instances, human presence and behaviour can also impact animals and birds. Whilst there are a large proportion of people who visit the Dales to appreciate wildlife in its natural environment, as the number of the visitors has increased, so have the instances of wildlife disturbance, resulting primarily from visitors' irresponsible or thoughtless behaviour. Most noted amongst the interview respondents were:

- Disturbance to ground nesting birds from dog walkers who fail to keep their pets on leads.
- Right of way users who leave gates open allowing livestock to wander into adjoining fields.
- Right of way users and/or their dogs who unsettle livestock with noise and unruly behaviour.
- Destruction of wildlife habitats from trampling.

### **6.5.6 Litter**

Since 1984, there have been no public litter bins within the Yorkshire Dales. This is intended to control the costs of litter disposal and reduce the potential for overflowing bins to pollute the environment (YDNPA, 2012a). Visitors are encouraged to take

responsibility for their rubbish and there are various signs positioned around the park telling people to take their litter home. However, there are still a large number who fail to do this and litter can often be seen on the popular walking routes and even at the side of the road and pathways, as observed in Figure 6.9.



**Figure 6.9 Litter left in a gateway to a public access route**

**@Sarah Murphy**

Not only is litter unsightly and causing visual pollution but as noted by a National Park Ranger in an interview, it can have far reaching consequences for both animals and vegetation:

“Animals can easily get their heads or bodies stuck in discarded jars and cans and six-pack plastic loops and that can lead to a slow, painful death. Discarded bottles can also cause another problem in sunny weather – they can act as magnifying glasses and start fires when the vegetation is dry could be absolutely devastating for the landscape and wildlife”.

(Craven Herald & Pioneer, 2013b)

### **6.5.7 Impact management & monitoring**

Some of the methods of impact management have already been discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter, notably visitor education and the maintenance and repair of eroded surfaces. However, other management strategies, some of which feature in the Visitor Management Strategy (YDNPA, 2010) are discussed below.

#### *Monitoring visitor numbers*

Unlike protected areas in other parts of the world, there are no formal fences designating the boundaries of the national park. Instead, there are signs positioned at the side of major roads such as that shown in Figure 6.10 below. For this reason, there are some people who may pass into the boundaries of the national park without being aware they are doing so. This makes monitoring visitor numbers particularly challenging.

From observational surveys, there are pedestrian counters on the entrances to the 5 National Park Centres however these are not an accurate reflection of visitor numbers in the Dales as a large percentage of visitors, particularly repeat visitors, do not attend the Centres on every trip. The NPA do however conduct surveys and regularly communicate with key attractions and facility providers who can help the NPA gauge approximate visitor numbers based on their experiences.



**Figure 6.10: A boundary of Yorkshire Dales, marked by a stone sign**      **@Sarah Murphy**

### *Controlling visitor numbers*

The NPA do not place any physical limits on the number of people who can enter and use the park at any one time. They also do not restrict visitors within specific areas of the park. This results in a large number being drawn to honeypot areas and attractions such as Malham, Grassington, the Three Peaks and the Pennine Way. Managing visitor movement is incredibly difficult and the Visitor Management Strategy openly admits that the YDNPA “have no legal means of control” and thus consider their only option to be “education and encouraging user’s voluntary restraint” (YDNPA, 2010: p.59). To some extent, this can be achieved through the encouragement of visitor codes of practice, the marketing of alternative areas and development of tourism facilities in areas which are better placed to deal with high visitor numbers. These approaches are being pursued however there is no ‘quick fix’. The development of brand new facilities elsewhere would likely require planning consent, which often involves a lengthy process and is difficult to obtain. Even encouraging visitors away from the busier sites is challenging, as these areas are rooted in their minds as they are the most well known and offer the experiences which are sought. It will therefore take time to educate visitors about the impact their continued presence is having on these valuable sites and encourage them to try new areas.

### *Traffic management*

Traffic management is outside of the NPA's remit and remains the responsibility of the County Council. The Visitor Management Strategy (YDNPA, 2010) highlights the commitment of the YDNPA to work with the Council to ensure that traffic is directed along appropriate routes, based on the capacity of the roads, e.g. through better signage. This again, is an issue whereby visitor management techniques are of relatively little use. Whilst the NPA can communicate the need for drivers to slow down and take greater care, the extent to which this advice is heeded is very much dependent on the individual visitor.

In respect of car parking, facilities are provided by a variety of organisations: the local Councils, the NPA and private landowners. The NPA operates 10 pay and display car parks offering an approximate capacity of 1,400 cars and 25 coaches. However, they openly admit:

“We have a long-standing policy of not providing car parking to accommodate peak demands, because in many areas this would be contrary to good visitor management and would lead to increased erosion of the rights of way network and other environmental issues” (YDNPA, 2010: p.59)

This strategy is thus viewed as an attempted means of controlling visitor numbers. However, the lack of car parking is not acting as a deterrent, as visitors are just instead opting to park wherever they find space, often on verges, which in turn is leading to erosion. The YDNPA's strategy provides little future direction in relation to car parking, save for the increased encouragement of public transport, which has been witnessed by the researcher in interpretation material on the website and in the National Park Centres.

### *Rangers & Volunteers*

The YDNPA employ rangers to protect and maintain the landscape (YDNPA, 2012a). Together with the volunteers who assist them, the rangers are very much perceived to be 'the eyes and ears on the ground' and are best placed to monitor changes in the environment and identify areas of concern. Each ranger is assigned a specific area

within the Park which enables them to familiarise themselves with the vegetation and wildlife, allowing them to easily identify any areas under pressure. Their authority in the park enables them to temporarily close rights of way to allow repair works to be done or if the area poses a danger to the public and, in the summer of 2013, they were also able to issue fixed penalty notices to anyone caught littering (Craven Herald & Pioneer, 2013b).

#### *Surveys & Feedback*

Other monitoring processes are very much reliant on feedback from surveys, with recent studies investigating visitor experiences and business practices *inter alia*. These surveys are mostly conducted by third party research companies and the results are used to inform the development of new policies and strategies. However, surveys such as this do not necessarily provide timely information as the results are often reported some time after the research was conducted. Furthermore, the results represent only a sample of the visiting or business population and thus may be subject to research bias.

#### *On-going challenges*

The monitoring of visitor behaviour and impacts in the park was recognised as a weakness amongst the interview respondents. However, following in-depth discussions around this, there appears to be little immediate resolution aside from the increased collaboration amongst tourism businesses which may enable greater assessment of key visitor trends. The upcoming years look set to present a challenge for tourism businesses in the Yorkshire Dales, with 2014 bringing the opening stages of the Tour de France and beyond that, the proposed extension to the western boundary of the park. Both of these will increase visitor numbers significantly and in turn, increase the pressure on the natural resources of the environment. Given that existing levels of usage already put strain on the landscape, the increased visitor numbers pose a real threat to the Dales. Monitoring impacts is therefore more important than ever to enable efficient identification of areas which are struggling and allow actions to be swiftly implemented to remedy any issues. Two interview respondents proposed that more aggressive visitor management techniques should be considered, either by restricting the number of cars in areas of the park or restricting visitor numbers on certain popular walking and cycling routes. However, both respondents stated that

whoever suggested this would need to be 'brave' and 'prepared for the backlash' as the idea would likely be poorly received by tourism businesses. Such measures may also be perceived to contradict the YDNPA's remit of providing access for all.

## **6.6 Understanding sustainable tourism development**

Many of the stakeholders believe that the impacts of tourism can be effectively managed through the pursuit of sustainable tourism. As a result, the Yorkshire Dales is actively marketed as a 'sustainable tourism destination' and the terms 'sustainable tourism' and 'sustainability' appear with significant frequency in policy documentation, paper-based and electronic promotional material. However, despite the wide use of the term, the only organisation who officially and openly defines the concept is the YDNPA. They present the following definition within their Sustainable Tourism Strategy and on their website, suggesting sustainable tourism to be:

“any form of tourism development, management or activity which ensures the long-term protection and preservation of natural, cultural and social resources and contributes in a positive and equitable manner to the economic development and well-being of individuals living, working or staying in protected areas.” (YDNPA, 2013a: p.4)

Further, in presenting this definition, the Strategy stresses that

“It is important to appreciate that sustainable tourism is not seen as a discrete and separate form of tourism. The approach is to apply the principles of economic, social and environmental sustainability to tourism as a whole, throughout partnership with all those involved.” (ibid)

In addition, the YDNPA specifically outline the principles which underpin their perception of sustainable tourism. Given their achievement of Charter status, unsurprisingly, they acknowledge and adopt the sustainable tourism principles set out by the EUROPARC Federation's Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (as outlined in Table 6.3), directly quoting them within their strategy documents and on their website.

- To involve all those implicated by tourism in and around the protected area in its development and management
- To prepare and implement a sustainable tourism strategy and action plan for protected areas
- To protect and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage for and through tourism and to protect it from excessive tourism development
- To provide all visitors with a high quality experience in all aspects of their visit
- To communicate effectively to visitors about the special qualities of the area.
- To encourage specific tourism products which enable discover and understanding of the area
- To increase knowledge of the protected area and sustainable issues amongst all those involved in tourism
- To ensure that tourism supports and does not reduce the quality of life of local resident
- To increase benefits from tourism to the local economy
- To monitor and influence visitor flows to reduce negative impacts

**Table 6.3: The principles of sustainable tourism adopted by the YDNPA (YDNPA, 2012a)**

Searches have been undertaken of marketing material and websites of the other key stakeholders and very few other definitions have been found. However, a vast number allude to definitions indirectly, e.g. by providing descriptions of the type of tourism they would encourage and discourage. For example:

- The Yorkshire Dales Society encourages 'soft' and more environmentally sustainable forms of tourism rather than 'hard' mass, car based tourism (YDS, 2012).
- The National Trust encourages sustainable tourism which promotes regional and local characteristics, improvements to public transport, support of local economies, communities and business and increases the awareness of visitor activities (National Trust, 2012).

Others however, offer no definition or explanation yet still make use of the phrase. This implies their assumption of others' knowledge and comprehension of the term. Amongst this category are:

- Dales Tourism Business Network
- Welcome to Yorkshire (although their use of 'sustainable tourism' is relatively infrequent, with references made instead to 'green tourism').

### **6.6.1 Personal interpretations**

All of the visitors and stakeholders involved in this research were familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism although, not surprisingly, there were variations in their interpretation of what the term actually meant. Most notable, were the differences between the interpretations proffered by those who *produce* tourism, those who *consume* it and residents.

The definitions offered by stakeholders directly involved in the provision of tourism were largely well aligned with the 'official' definition given in the YDNPA's Tourism Strategy and outlined above. Given the considerable engagement between tourism businesses and the YDNPA this was not particularly surprising. Notably, the definitions largely included multidimensional elements and highlighted the importance of addressing local community needs, the conservation of the natural environment and increasing opportunities for local tourism businesses. Example definitions given include:

"It is about minimising environmental impacts whilst maximising economic and social ones and hopefully maximising environmental ones as well, so it's not just avoiding any adverse, but also benefitting the environment as well."

(Respondent YD3)

"It's something that is going to make a difference and have a lasting impact. I think sometimes sustainability is too focused on green issues and we need to get a balance between everything else."

(Respondent YD4)

“It’s trying to get an equal balance really, about low impact on the environment to conserve it but also to bring wealth in as well, so it’s trying to get a balance so that the wealth creation doesn’t diminish the quality of the environment, which is the asset, so one doesn’t destroy the other.” (Respondent YD2)

“It means enhancing visitor numbers and enjoyment to the area but without causing any damage or detrimental effects to the landscape...so it’s getting that balance between having visitors and providing an enjoyable visit and protecting a very important landscape.” (Respondent, YD6)

“It’s about developing tourism which doesn’t harm the park - the communities, the habitat, the wildlife, so that everyone can go one enjoying it for years to come.” (Respondent YD9)

“I take it to mean sustainable in all senses, not just the green angle but also the economic and for the community, the longer term benefits of tourism...and avoiding any negative impact to communities, landscape etc.” (Respondent YD8)

“I think it’s about contributing to the local community, not damaging the environment, integrating better with local people and local life and leaving the landscape as you find it, so it goes on into the future.” (Respondent YD11)

“Green tourism, responsible tourism, sustainable tourism – whichever of these terms you want to use, it is tourism which takes into account the needs of the environment, local residents, business and visitors now and in the future.” (Respondent YD1)

In contrast, the tourists, or *consumers* of tourism, who were asked about the concept were clearly less comfortable providing a definition. Some opted to avoid answering altogether and stated ‘I don’t know’ whilst others proffered short, simple definitions such as:

“To me, sustainable tourism is a balance of things, between tourism and an area.” (Respondent YD17)

and;

“It’s tourism that goes on, that has a long life span...that’s in demand and is likely to be sustained – so not like the Olympic park which just lasts for a few months or so...it’s long term.” (Respondent YD18)

Following the request to provide such a definition, the respondents were then engaged in a discussion surrounding the principles of sustainable tourism. At this point, when the ‘sustainability label’ had been removed, *all* of the respondents were able to better communicate their ideas, including those individuals who had previously been unable to provide a definition. This illustrated that, on the whole, respondents grasped the meaning of the concept and its key principles although suggested that perhaps they struggled with the formal label of ‘sustainability’.

This observation was also noted by various tourism practitioner respondents, who suggested that using the phrase had become more of a hindrance than a help and was actually little more than a ‘buzzword’. One respondent commented that:

“Often people, they see the word [*sustainability*] and switch off completely, that’s it, they don’t want to hear it”. (Respondent YD3)

There was suggestion that, rather than focusing on defining the term, the priority should be on helping stakeholders understand the *principles* of sustainable tourism. The respondents from WtY stated that this was an avenue they were pursuing within marketing and that they had made a purposeful shift away from the use of the term ‘sustainable’ internally for this very reason. Other respondents also commented that people, specifically community members, need to see firsthand what sustainability means if they are to fully engage with it. For example, they need to witness the benefits sustainable tourism can bring, by seeing the maintenance of local services and the creation of new jobs.

Interestingly, it was the resident respondents who had the most one dimensional understanding of sustainable tourism, with all three giving definitions which focused entirely on environmental conservation, with little mention of the social or economic

dimensions. They did however also include reference to futurity and the need for an ongoing, long term industry.

### **6.6.2 Sustainability: A realistic goal?**

During the interviews, respondents were asked to provide their perspectives on the overall compatibility of sustainable tourism development with the national park structure. Many responded that they thought the two were relatively complementary, based on the statutory remit of National Parks generally. Indeed, one respondent stated:

“If you look at the aims of national parks, they are quite well aligned with definitions of sustainable tourism in that both are concerned with the area’s well-being, its landscape and people yet they also want to create recreational opportunities. So surely, to fulfil this remit, the tourism we’re creating *must* be sustainable.” (Respondent YD13)

She makes a very valid point however, other respondents raised an issue with the compatibility of ‘sustainability’ when linked with the tourism industry generally, arguing that their coupling created a contradiction. One respondent noted:

“I think you can get close to sustainable or responsible or wise or whatever you want to call it tourism but I don’t think personally that it’s completely achievable. I think there’ll always be some compromise and to get the balance right so its doing exactly what it needs to for the businesses; the landscape’s perfect as it needs to be and the messages are getting out and everyone understands it and the political dimensions - I think it’s a really big ask to get all that right.” (Respondent YD1)

These thoughts were supported by other respondents’ views, many of whom deemed the concept to be something of an enigma that should not be seen as an ‘end goal’ but an on-going process. Thus, the challenge would be in measuring sustainable tourism and ascertaining ‘how far along the road’ people have got.

It was widely believed that the overall interpretation of sustainable tourism was relatively consistent amongst stakeholders directly involved in tourism, primarily due to the significance it receives in policy and strategy documents. The resident respondents were less sure although did not particularly highlight any confusion or contradictions in the messages projected by other tourism stakeholders. Respondents suggested that the main source of difficulty and potential conflict therefore arises when priorities and associated actions need to be identified as it was thought that some stakeholders tend to put their individual needs first and, in doing so, lose sight of the park's *overall* goals. It was suggested that there needs to be a more structured, collective approach to sustainability, with individuals appreciating the 'bigger picture'. One respondent commented that:

"It's a sense check really, the definition is irrelevant – all development simply has to fit in with the park's remit." (Respondent YD3)

It was thought that this lack of homogeneity arises for two reasons: naivety and purposeful intent to strive for individual goals, whatever the cost. Whilst attempts have been made to overcome both of these difficulties through education and increased stakeholder engagement, there remains:

"...a number of disparate groups who simply do not talk to each other and as a result, there is just no coherent, mass movement towards sustainable development." (Respondent YD12)

## **6.7 Conclusion**

The Yorkshire Dales is a complex case study. Tourism has a long established presence in the park and, together with agriculture, is one of the leading industries generating employment and income. Millions of visitors are drawn to the Dales each year, primarily to appreciate and engage with the area's natural environment. Key attractions include the dramatic landscape features such as limestone pavement, waterfalls, caves and dales, with visitors enjoying a plethora of outdoor activities including hiking, climbing, caving, horse-riding and cycling. Whilst the national park is largely privately owned land, there is a substantial right of way network and open access land, providing

visitors with the opportunity to experience an extensive proportion of the natural landscape free of charge. Alongside the environment, the area also has a substantial cultural heritage, primarily due its agricultural history and the communities which live within the boundaries of the national park.

There are a significant number of stakeholders involved in tourism planning and management in the Yorkshire Dales. Central amongst these is the YDNPA, whose dual remit to conserve the landscape and encourage enjoyment and access, is prescribed by statute. From a specific tourism stance, the NPA take the lead in developing the area's tourism strategy, working closely with other stakeholders to minimise conflicts and ensure that congruent goals and objectives are identified. Other notable stakeholders include charities, local Councils, residents, visitors, regional tourism bodies and tourism businesses. As part of this research, individuals from each of these stakeholder groups were interviewed to enable greater insight into their understanding of concepts, their main concerns and priorities for tourism development.

The majority of impacts commented on by stakeholders were negative, with very few respondents specifically noting any upside to the industry. Despite this, various other sources recognise tourism for its contribution to wider society, e.g. through the promotion of local arts, crafts, food and drink, as well as the income and employment potential it provides for communities. The most noted detriments of the industry revolve around problems of congestion, erosion, loss of community and overcrowding. These not only result in negative social and environmental impacts, but also have a knock on effect on the visitor experience itself. The area attracts visitors to its quaint villages and tranquil countryside and if visitors' presence is detracting from these qualities, in essence, tourism is bearing the seeds of its own destruction.

It is thought that the key to managing these negative impacts is through the widespread adoption of sustainable tourism. As a consequence, the Yorkshire Dales markets itself as a sustainable destination, with the NPA actively promoting the definition and principles specified by the EUROPARC Federation under their Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. Other tourism businesses have also adopted the label and although few offer their own definition of the concept, the interview

respondents from these stakeholder groups illustrated a similar understanding of the concept. This is not surprising considering the importance the term receives in strategy documents and throughout consultation processes led by the NPA. Difficulties in defining sustainable tourism were noted amongst resident groups however, largely, the respondents were able to engage in a discussion relating to the principles of the concept and thus, it was determined that the 'label' of sustainability can sometimes be considered more of a hindrance than a help.

In an effort to develop a unified understanding of sustainable tourism and, more importantly, operationalise the concept, the YDNPA and other stakeholders undertake a number of management techniques to minimise the negative impacts associated with the industry. Examples of such methods include stakeholder engagement in planning and management, producing a tourism strategy, promoting an integrated industry, visitor education, traffic management and ongoing impact measurement and monitoring. However, such strategies take time to achieve and as such, respondents suggested that the concept of sustainable tourism generally should be viewed as an ongoing process rather than an end goal. Indeed, the fluctuations in visitor numbers and the fragmented nature of the tourism industry means that the balance between social, economic and environmental aspects are constantly changing and this looks set to remain a key challenge over the coming years. Despite this, the overall perception amongst respondents was that, if managed effectively, the national park provided a forum which was generally compatible with the development of sustainable tourism.

## Chapter 7

### RESEARCH FINDINGS: NEW FOREST

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#### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the New Forest in the same format and structure as chapter 6. However, in presenting the findings for the New Forest, it also begins to highlight the key similarities and differences compared to the Yorkshire Dales, drawing attention to the different contexts of the two national parks. This can be seen particularly in sections 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4, which are ultimately aimed at identifying the destination's key unique characteristics. In particular, one of the major differences is in the structure of the land ownership within the two contexts: whilst the land within the Yorkshire Dales is largely owned by individuals, in the New Forest, almost 50% of the land is Crown Land which is managed by the Forestry Commission. Ancient land management and laws continue to be practiced in the New Forest in relation to these Crown Lands notably including the Rights of Commoning which allow people to graze their animals on the open forestland. However, most significantly, these Crown Lands provide no access restrictions for visitors. In contrast, given the significant private ownership, access to the majority of the Yorkshire Dales is provided to visitors through an extensive rights of way network.

As with chapter 6, the latter half of the chapter moves on to analyse the perceptions of stakeholders, drawing on the data collected within the key respondent interviews and observation work. Section 7.5 specifically outlines the main tourism impacts identified within the New Forest. Section 7.6 then examines the different meanings of sustainable tourism development amongst stakeholders, before moving on to finally consider the perceptions on the appropriateness of the sustainable tourism development concept generally.

## 7.2 New Forest National Park profile

Whilst the outer boundaries of the New Forest National Park are located in Dorset and Wiltshire, the majority is situated in Hampshire in Southern England. Established in 2005, it is one of the UK's newest national parks and, covering an area of just 570 square km, it is also one of the UK's smallest (UKANPA, 2012). Despite the national park's name, the area is not typical forestland in the sense of dense tree cover. Although it is purported to contain one of the highest concentrations of ancient tress in Western Europe (NFNPA, 2012), this woodland is also complemented by privately owned farmland and vast areas of 'open forest', which is made up of bogs, heathlands, grassland and lawn. This open forestland is owned by the Crown and managed by the Forestry Commission. Its primary use however is as grazing land for Commoners' animals and use for recreational purposes (Cooper, 2007). A particularly unique feature of the area is the presence of wild ponies, which roam freely around the forest and provide a key attraction for many visitors. Figure 7.1 provides an example of a typical panorama, showing open grazing land with ponies, the ancient forest in the background and the narrow access roads traversing the landscape.



**Figure 7.1: A typical New Forest landscape, with wild ponies roaming freely.**

### 7.2.1 Local communities

The 2011 census revealed the resident population of the New Forest to be 34,922, with 48.5% being male and 51.5% being female (ONS, 2013a). Since 2001, the number of residents has increased by 2.6%. This is considerably less than the England and Wales overall percentage increase of 7.1% over the same period. Yet, despite this relatively slow growth, the area has the second highest population density of all of the UK National Parks, at 62.5 people per square km (ONS, 2013a). Given this statistic, it is not surprising that, unlike the Yorkshire Dales, residents are more concentrated in some areas of the park and, as a result, there are various larger settlements. Examples include Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst and Sway, all of which had a population greater than 3,000 at the time of the last census (ONS, 2013a). These larger villages provide ‘hubs’ of facilities within the national park and, as a consequence, have developed into honeypot locations, experiencing high concentrations of visitor numbers throughout the year. Whilst to some extent, these honeypots help to protect the provision of rural facilities as there is a constant demand for these services. However, the popularity of the area is leading to increased interest in the locations from larger corporate giants. A prime example of this is Costa coffee, who opened a branch in Lyndhurst in 2012 despite petitions by other local businesses and residents. One business owner in the village stated:

“I was disappointed when it opened because apart from Budgens [*supermarket*], the rest of the shops on the high street are all one offs, there's no big giants. Now that Costa is here, more chains might turn up and if they do, well...I think it will just feel like we're losing a bit of what makes us different, what makes us special.” (Respondent NF6)

This sentiment was echoed by visitors who were interviewed, one of whom commented that:

“It does stand out a bit amongst the other gift and tourist shops but then it also looked quite busy when I walked past earlier. Maybe it's what tourists want. Personally I would rather go to one of the little, friendly cafes but I suppose some people like the familiar.” (Respondent NF14)

Alongside the presence of these larger villages within the park, there are also substantial towns and cities close to the park boundaries. The southern park boundaries are bordered by Lymington, New Milton and Burton whilst the larger cities of Bournemouth, Southampton, Salisbury and Winchester are all within a 15 mile radius. These are excellent 'gateways' to the national park as they provide access to key infrastructure and are also easily commutable for day visitors who live locally.

The age structure of communities in the New Forest is in line with other national parks in the UK and similar to the demographics displayed in Yorkshire Dales. As illustrated by Table 7.1, 27.4% of residents in 2011 were aged 65 years and older. Unfortunately, as the national park was not designated until 2005, there is no true area comparison available from the 2001 census so it is not possible to examine how this has changed over that time. However, the national average in 2011 is only 16% for this age category and this implies that the demographic within the New Forest is notably older than in other regions and areas. Alongside this, data from the ONS also illustrated that 21.8% of usual residents were retired and this could have significant implications for the economic and social contributions that residents make to individual communities. This will be considered in greater depth later in the chapter.

<b>Age bracket</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
0-10 years	2,913	8.4%
11-20 yrs	3,669	10.4%
21-30 yrs	2,274	6.5%
31-45 yrs	4,957	14.3%
46-60 yrs	8,129	23.3%
61-65 yrs	3,395	9.7%
65 yrs +	9,585	27.4%
Total	34,922	100%

**Table 7.1: Current age structure of the New Forest** *(Statistics sourced from ONS, 2013a)*

## **7.2.2 Historical & cultural significance**

Evidence of the New Forest's significant cultural and historical background can be found all over the national park. Indeed, one of the key features of the national park is the significant ownership of land by the Crown. This area is referred to as the 'Crown Lands' and is largely categorised as open forestland. The Crown Lands form almost 50% of the total area of the current National Park. Whilst the national park designation is relatively new, the founding of the New Forest and open forestland itself dates back to 1079, when the area was commandeered as a royal hunting ground for King William the Conqueror. Its designation as a 'forest' enabled the enforcement of Forest Laws which essentially reserved the key resources (e.g. timber and deer) for the specific use of the reigning Monarch (Chatters & Read, 2006). At this time, a large number of forests were designated, particularly within Southern England and the New Forest had no special importance. However, over time, the Forest Laws evolved and locals were able to extract 'Rights of Common' which enabled them to graze their cattle and gather wood for fuel from the open forest land. The significance of these Forest Laws has now waned and many areas let go of the legal structure and land management techniques which accompanied them many years ago. However, evidence of the on-going practice of these systems can still be found within the New Forest today (Cooper, 2007).

The 'Rights of Common' are still vehemently defended by locals in the New Forest and continues to shape the management of open forestland. These rights are attached to land within and around the national park and give the individual 'Commoner' the authority to graze their cattle on land owned by the Crown. Evidence of these Commoning practices can be found all over the New Forest and it is estimated that 500 Commoners currently exercise their Right, with 5,000 animals freely grazing open forestland (Cooper, 2007).

The regulation of Commoning is undertaken by the Court of Verderers, which is a surviving form of Forest government. Today, it combines ancient and modern laws and has a legal status on a par with a Magistrates Court. It consists of ten Verderers, five of whom are elected by Commoners and five appointed by governing bodies, including DEFRA, the NPA and the Forestry Commission. Their primary activities are concerned with directing the actions of the Commoners, e.g. in deciding when the pannage season

is (the right for pigs to roam free in the Forest). They ensure the Commoners generally act in a responsible manner and are also concerned with the health and welfare of the Commoners' animals. The Verderers employ five Agisters who attend any traffic accidents involving animals and, at a general level, ensure that grazing animals are of sufficient health and have had their marking fees paid (Chatters & Read, 2006). However, they also have a responsibility to regulate development in the Forest and thus any proposed developments *must* be approved by the Verderers before it can progress, including infrastructure changes and facilities development *inter alia* (VNF, nd). They therefore have particular relevance in the governance of the national park and their relative significance as a key stakeholder will be considered in greater detail in section 7.4.1.

The New Forest landscape itself has been influenced by centuries of Commoning. The grazing animals, particularly ponies and cattle, have largely determined the flora which grows in the forest according to "what they will or will not eat" (Cooper, 2007). In addition, some open forestland has long been cordoned off by the Crown and classified as 'Inclosures' which suspend the Commoning Rights. Originally these areas were designed to keep animals away from specific forestry plantations which were intended for timber harvesting. Such timber harvesting is no longer common practice in the New Forest, as it has historically led to extensive damage to the habitats and wildlife. Some Inclosures have therefore been released back into open forestland. However, there are still some remaining Inclosures which are managed by the Forestry Commission and form areas of highly valued, managed woodland (Chatters & Read, 2006).

A significant point in relation to the Crown Lands is that it contains no public rights of way. Under the Law of Property Act (1925), the public have a right to walk or ride horses on this land freely and thus, there are no restrictions on visitor access to the open heathland or woodland. There are however areas of the Crown Lands where these Common Rights have been revoked. These include 'Enclosures', which are Crown Lands that have been fenced off and where access is limited. Today, these primarily form privately owned estates and are commonly used as fields and for other farming purposes (Chatters & Read, 2006). However, whilst access to these lands is restricted, it

is not prohibited. Indeed, across these and other private lands in the New Forest, there are over 310km of public rights of way enabling visitor access (NFNPA, 2007e; 2012).

Whilst the landscape within the New Forest itself has largely been influenced by the presence of Commoning, Inclosures and Enclosures, it is important to note that this is not the full extent of the National Park but merely the Forest itself. Often, when considering the New Forest, visitors tend to only visualise the Forest itself and the immediate surrounding areas. However, in actuality, the National Park boundary extends right to the southern coast. The consideration of this coastal area within guide books often seems to be something of an afterthought and, whilst this probably makes discussions easier due to their stark contrasts, it is somewhat artificial to segment the area in this manner. Furthermore, in doing so, some visitors do not seem aware that this coast is still within the National Park boundary. For example, one interview respondent stated:

“We’re only really here for the Forest today, to see the ponies, the deer, the old oak trees and things. To be honest, I didn’t know that the coast was even in the national park until I went into the Tourist Information [*office*] yesterday.”

(Respondent NF15)

Much like the open forestland, the coastal region has also been shaped by the historical actions of Commoners. As shown in Figure 7.2, the landscape is predominantly made up of marshland, mudflats, shingle and grasses (NFNPA, 2012). Whilst Commoners still graze their animals here, part of the coastal area today forms a Nature Reserve and in winter, it is a particularly significant area for wildlife and migrating birds who flock to the wetland areas (Chatters & Read, 2006).



**Figure 7.2: An example landscape along the New Forest National Park coastline**  
*@Sarah Murphy*

### **7.3 Tourism**

The website and official documentation published by the NPA estimate total annual visitor volumes at 13.5 million visitor days (NFNPA, 2007a), with an approximate spend of £123 million (UKANPA, 2012). However, this data originates from surveys conducted in 2005 and thus, it is significantly dated and should be treated with some caution. The following visitor profiling has also been drawn from the same survey results and has been used by the NPA and other stakeholders within the development of the current tourism strategy and policy documentation. Whilst it is dated, the results from the key respondent interviews and observations onsite also confirmed some of these findings and thus, they are therefore considered to be broadly still applicable. The key characteristics noted in the survey results (NFNPA, 2007a) include:

- 96% of visitors travel to the New Forest by car.

- 60% of visitors were day visitors and of these, the majority were either local residents or from a location within easy reach of the New Forest, e.g. from other areas of Hampshire.
- Local residents formed a key demographic within visitor numbers.
- Over 46% of visitors were aged 55 years and older.
- 34% of visitors had utilised maps and information sources such as the internet to plan their visit.

Whilst the above demographics form the basis of the visitor market in the New Forest, one of the key priorities identified in the NPA's Tourism Strategy is to increase accessibility for marginalised groups, who may feel excluded from the Park due to lack of opportunities, cost, transport of other barriers (NFNPA, 2010b). Unlike the Yorkshire Dales, a significant proportion of walks and access ways in the New Forest are already level surfaces and thus, are able to be utilised by those with wheelchairs or pushchairs. The New Forest visitor website has a dedicated section which details areas and attractions which are fully accessible to all at the present time. However, it is noted that some facilities do require improvement to aid accessibility, e.g. through the introduction of easy to use gates and disabled toilets.

### **7.3.1 Key attractions**

As with the Yorkshire Dales, the primary attraction for the New Forest is the landscape itself and the majority of activities engaged in by visitors involve the outdoors. Popular pursuits noted within the results of the 2005 Survey included walking, camping, cycling, sailing, horse riding and wildlife appreciation (NFNPA, 2007a). This specifically includes observing the famous New Forest ponies.

However, alongside these experiences, specific attractions directly marketed to visitors include:

- *Buckler's Hard*: A maritime museum providing insights into the history of shipbuilding in the local area.

- *Exbury Gardens*: A 200 acre garden and steam railway experience which hosts more than 125,000 visitors a year (NFNPA, 2010b).
- *Beaulieu Motor Museum*: A motor museum which attracts more than 350,000 visitors a year (NFNPA, 2010b).
- *New Forest Museum*: Contained within the same building as the National Park Centre in Lyndhurst, the Museum chronicles the development of the history and heritage of the New Forest through interactive exhibits (NFNPA, 2007b).
- *New Forest Tour*: This is an open top bus tour and, although it is primarily concerned with encouraging visitors to use public transport, it is also marketed as an attraction in its own right. The tour has two hour long loops, one around the western and northern parts of the park and the other around the south easterly area. Both loops have stops in Lyndhurst as well as other popular tourism destinations such as Beaulieu, Brockenhurst and Ashurst. Visitors are also able to purchase tickets from major nearby locations such as Southampton, Bournemouth and Salisbury and, as an added incentive, are able to connect to the Tour using other forms of public transport free of charge (BWD, nd).

Unlike the Yorkshire Dales however, the New Forest has a number of honeypot villages, which provide the majority of core facilities including a significant amount of accommodation. These villages attract a considerable concentration of visitor numbers each year. Most notable amongst these honeypots is Lyndhurst, which has a reputation for being “the capital of the New Forest” (NFNPA, 2007b). The village is full of character buildings, which date back to Jacobean and Tudor periods, many of which are located in the centre and today form shops and cafes. Figure 7.3 provides a vista of the Lyndhurst high street and clearly displays the village’s character. The village has a substantial amount of trees, many of which are protected by Preservation Orders. The village also provides easy access to the open forestland via the Bolton’s Bench access. Facilities in the village have been developed to accommodate significant visitor numbers, such as the car parks at Bolton’s Bench and the Visitor Information Centre. However, the village structure itself is not intended for such high volumes and this often results in numerous negative impacts during peak times. For example, the village

structure consists of relatively narrow, one way road systems which become strained and congested during peak tourism season.



**Figure 7.3: The main street in Lyndhurst, August 2011 @Sarah Murphy**

### **7.3.2 Infrastructure**

96% of visitors arrive into the New Forest via car (NFNPA, 2007a) which is not surprising given the easy access provided by the M27 and major A roads surrounding the park boundaries. The M27 actually runs into the national park, before turning into the A31 at Cadnam. Of the visitors interviewed as part of this study, all had arrived into the national park via car. The primary reason for this was to enable them to travel freely and easily around the park. However, they also found the large number of car parks to be a significant benefit. Alongside those provided by the Council, the Forestry Commission provide and maintain 134 car parks for visitor use, an example of which can be seen in Figure 7.4 below. These car parks are well kept and are situated all over

the National Park, providing good access for harder to reach areas. The largest of these car parks provide key facilities such as toilets and whilst they often charge a fee for use, this does little to detract visitors from using their cars as their primary means of travel. Indeed, one interview respondent commented that:

“I think most people come in their cars because they haven’t bothered to look for an alternative. The car is the easy option.” (Respondent NF8)

This is a valid point. The comments from the visitors implied that cars were required to enable travel around the national park. However, in actuality, there is a good bus network and strong public transport links all across the area. Extending out of the park, buses also depart from major attractions and visitor hubs, linking to the major cities of Southampton, Bournemouth and Salisbury on a regular basis.

To complement the bus service, there are also four railway stations within the National Park: Ashurst, Brockenhurst, Beaulieu and Sway. Brockenhurst is a particularly large station, with more than 130 trains arriving and departing each day. This provides fast, efficient links to major cities all across the UK. In an effort to encourage use of public transport, some accommodation providers and food retailers offer discounts for visitors on production of their travel ticket (NFNPA, 2007c).



Figure 7.4: A Forestry Commission maintained car park

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### 7.3.3 Marketing

The volume of marketing and promotional material available which relates to the New Forest is vastly overwhelming. A Google search of 'New Forest Tourist Information' revealed over 2.5 million results. As well as websites for the larger tourism bodies and NPA, there are a significant proportion of smaller tourism business websites and broader informational sites which offer insights into individual visitor experiences (e.g. Trip Advisor) and newspaper articles. A number of websites were reviewed and analysed to ascertain the general tone amongst marketing messages.

The New Forest is very much marketed as a sustainable tourism destination. In particular, the promotion of tourism is often integrated with other elements of Forest life. For example, the 'New Forest Marque' is awarded to eateries and accommodation providers for the use of quality local produce. Many accommodation providers and eateries include the Marque's brand within their marketing material, on their websites and as a window sticker on their premises. This demonstrates their support for local farming and produce and highlights the importance of developing tourism alongside

other industries; a viewpoint which was also articulated by the stakeholders interviewed.

In addition, other specific schemes have been identified and are detailed below which illustrate an integrated and sustainable approach to destination marketing.

### ***Green Leaf Scheme***

The Green Leaf Tourism Scheme is awarded to accommodation providers who actively adopt a sustainable approach in the day to day management of their business. In participating in the scheme, they show their commitment to car free tourism, support of the New Forest Marque, recycling initiatives, landscape conservation and community tourism benefits. The industry encourages visitors to use accommodation which has been awarded 'Green Leaf' status and these businesses often benefit from additional marketing opportunities relating to this.

### ***Brand New Forest***

The Brand New Forest campaign is aimed at supporting the *local* economy and backing *local* businesses. The campaign has 6 key themes:

- Doing better business
- Enjoy local
- Eat & grow local
- Exercise local
- Save energy local
- Shop & buy local

Individuals can purchase a card which provides special offers and discounts from local businesses to users. Whilst predominantly the campaign is aimed at residents, it also raises awareness amongst visitors. Businesses supporting the campaign can use the Brand New Forest logo in marketing materials which highlights to visitors their commitment to local initiatives and the development of a sustainable local economy (BNF, nd).

#### **7.4 Managing the New Forest**

In common with the Yorkshire Dales and other UK national parks, the New Forest has the same two purposes outlined under statute: conservation of the environment and heritage; and promotion of opportunities to enjoy the area (UKANPA, 2012). The National Park Authority (NFNPA) have designated responsibility for planning in the New Forest and, as part of this remit are required to produce a Management Plan and accompanying industry specific strategies to guide the development of the area (NFNPA, 2012). This includes the Recreation & Management Plan which is produced in collaboration with a range of key stakeholders and forms the area's tourism strategy. Despite this, the relative significance of the NPA was not highlighted to such a great extent by New Forest respondents as was noted amongst Yorkshire Dales respondents. It was thought by some that this was due to the relative newness of the NPA and the broader national park status in comparison to the age of the tourism industry in the New Forest more generally.

The New Forest District Council has a particularly significant role in the area. Historically, they have been the lead organisation for destination management in the New Forest and this role continues today. They work with a significant number of stakeholder groups from across a range of sectors and industries to deliver key messages and define and manage actions and progress against the goals in the tourism strategy. To some extent, given the centrality of the Council in tourism development, the role of the NPA in relation to tourism in the New Forest appears much more 'hands off' than that which was observed in the Yorkshire Dales. Whilst they actively encourage their own NPA-led tourism projects, they seem less concerned with tourism development in general. Indeed, the NPA's representative interviewed as part of this research stressed that the NPA were not concerned with increasing tourism numbers as the area already experienced significant visitor pressures. Together with the Council, the NPA do however encourage the participation of key stakeholders, viewing them as partners in the tourism planning and management process. Whilst the NPA takes the lead in *developing* the Tourism Strategy for the area, it is the landowners and managers who are ultimately charged with *delivering* against its various goals and objectives. Thus, working collaboratively is of vital importance if the goals are to be realistic and realised.

On the whole, tourism practitioners viewed the 'theoretical' national park structure favourably, perceiving it to be instrumental in conserving the primary tourism product: the landscape. The national park was thought to provide a model which was easily recognisable by visitors and which would promote an inclusive, friendly and accessible destination, just through the power of the national park brand. Indeed, these perceptions were supported by visitors who were interviewed, one of whom commented:

“To me, the fact it is a national park means that the area is recognised as important and that people are working to look after it. I really only started coming after it became a national park but I have been interested to read about the history of the area and the role that tourism has played in that over the years.”

(Respondent, NF13)

However, whilst the national park branding was generally well regarded, the practical actions of the NPA itself were questioned by a few respondents who thought that it had added little value to the area's tourism offering and had merely contributed an additional layer of bureaucracy to tourism planning. Furthermore, it was thought that:

“in creating this organism, you separate some aspects of it from other aspects which is actually counterproductive.”

(Respondent NF2)

This stops the national park being perceived and managed as one distinct unit which, in itself, defies the principles of sustainable development. However, when questioned about possible means of remedying this, the same respondent commented that the way in which the NPA operates is similar to that of a District or Borough Council and thus, real change would only be achieved through processes higher up the governance system.

### **7.4.1 Key stakeholders**

All tourism practitioner respondents noted that there are a significant number of stakeholders involved in New Forest tourism. This presents both an opportunity and a threat for the area. Largely many of these stakeholders have different remits which, through collaborative working, can complement each other's work to achieve sustainable tourism development. However, due to their sheer number, identifying and engaging the relevant stakeholder groups is challenging. Later in this chapter, attention will turn to the engagement methods. First however, the initial stakeholder analysis undertaken in Chapter 5 has been revisited below. Whilst the following list does not detail every category of stakeholder present in the New Forest, it highlights the dominant organisations and categories which have significant influence in planning and management processes.

- **New Forest District Council**

The District Council are the lead authority in relation to tourism management in the national park. They have a fundamental role in working collaboratively with a variety of stakeholders. In particular, they espouse the VICE working model which identifies Visitors, Industry, Community and the Environment as the cornerstones of effective tourism planning and management. Historically, they have produced tourism strategies which are still widely regarded as useful today (see the following section). They work closely with the Forestry Commission and the NPA in particular, and whilst each have different remits, these complement each other to allow effective destination management. Outside of the tourism team, the council also have responsibility for car parking and planning issues along with other statutory District Council responsibilities.

- **Forestry Commission**

The Forestry Commission manage the Crown Lands within the New Forest. They are responsible for delivering specific programmes within their organisational remit outlined in the Crown Lands Management Plan, which is discussed in greater detail in the following section (FC, 2008). They work closely with the NPA and NFDC to identify key priorities for the New Forest for use in Strategy

documents however, the ultimate responsibility for *delivering results* in relation to the Crown Lands is solely the Forestry Commission's.

- **New Forest Tourism Association**

The NFTA was established by the NFDC in 1989 to work in partnership with the Council to promote the destination as a year round tourism destination. The importance and nature of the organisation has changed very little since this time. The NFTA is a trade organisation with more than 300 members from a variety of tourism businesses. The organisation also supports a series of Sector Group networks which promote the interactive working of similar businesses within tourism, e.g. encouraging hotel owners to work together, B&B owners to work together etc (NFTA,2012).

- **Verderers**

Predominantly, the Court of Verderers are responsible for overseeing the actions of the Commoners and thus, have relatively little direct interaction with tourists. However, they also have a duty to regulate development within the Forest. They work closely with other landowners and the Forestry Commission to consider the appropriateness for proposed developments, these may include new roads, camp sites and car parks to name a few (VNF, nd). Thus, their actions and decisions both directly and indirectly influence tourism development.

- **Commoners & Local Residents**

There are almost 35,000 residents in the New Forest and significantly more in the nearby towns and villages bordering the park. Given the population density and concentration of residents in key areas of the Forest, tourist-host interactions are inevitably frequent and it is important to minimise any potential hostilities to ensure the tourists are not deterred from visiting and communities remain satisfied. This is particularly important amongst the Commoners who graze their animals on the open forestland in the centre of the New Forest. Visitor actions can often directly impact the animals and in turn, the Commoners' working lives. Their opinions on key issues should therefore be

given consideration when designing tourism planning and management strategies.

- **Tourism businesses:**

There are hundreds of tourism businesses operating within the New Forest and the immediate surrounding areas and save for a small number of chain hotels, these are all relatively small, locally owned businesses. Whilst many have historically been focused on economic return, through engagement methods, they are broadening their concerns and increasingly also recognising the importance of social and environmental needs. However, their reliance on visitor numbers and income generation is obvious as ultimately, they are businesses concerned with turning a profit. Tourism businesses occupy a prime position in influencing visitor experiences within the park and thus possess significant power as a stakeholder.

- **Charities & Other landowners**

Aside from the Forestry Commission, various large charities and other organisations have landholdings in the New Forest, including the National Trust, Natural England and Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. These, and other smaller charities and landowners, sit on the Steering Group for tourism and all contribute to the development of appropriate policies and documentation. They have their own charitable agendas however these are largely aligned with the broader aims of the national park thus enabling effective collaborative working.

- **Extended stakeholders:**

Similar to the Yorkshire Dales, outside of the national park, there are a number of stakeholder organisations which have the potential to influence the design of tourism planning and management strategies in the New Forest. These include the national tourism body Visit Britain, the DCMS, UKANPA, as well as the planning bodies of nearby destinations and other national parks and protected areas. The Management Plan and other strategies developed by the NPA consider the broader objectives of these other areas to ensure that the

objectives developed do not conflict with those sought by broader organisations.

- **Visitors:**

Visitors are a fundamental stakeholder in planning and management decisions. An estimated 13.5 million tourists (NFNPA, 2007a) visit the New Forest annually and repeat visitors form a key segment of this total. Ensuring visitors have a high quality experience and are satisfied with facilities and products is therefore of the upmost importance. Obtaining feedback relating to visitor satisfaction and monitoring changes to visitor demographics and volumes is therefore particularly important so that an informed and appropriate tourism development strategy can be formulated.

#### **7.4.2 Strategies & Policies**

A number of key documents and policies have been identified as significant within tourism planning and management in the New Forest. A summary of these is provided below, with brief comments on the main objectives outlined therein.

##### ***New Forest Management Plan 2010-2015 (NFNPA, 2010a)***

As noted in section 7.4 above, the New Forest NPA has a statutory obligation to produce a 5 yearly management plan which provides “a blueprint for everyone with an interest in the Forest” (p.iii). The role of the plan is to coordinate the work of the national park’s stakeholders and the Plan specifically highlights the vision for the area in 20 years time. To achieve this, it stresses the importance of collaborative working, through the development and use of partnerships and cross boundary co-operations. The Plan also outlines broad objectives and specific priority actions for the 5 year period whilst identifying the key partners required in achieving these. Given the broad nature of the Management Plan, most of these are not specifically tourism orientated, however objective 7 within the Plan is to:

“enhance people’s enjoyment and quality of experience of the National Park, while safeguarding the special qualities of the area” (NFNPA, 2010a: p. 45)

Specific priorities in relation to this objective include:

- The production of a Recreation & Management Strategy;
- Implementing a Countrywide Access Plan & Rights of Way Improvement Plan;
- Developing a programme of outreach work with young people;
- Developing promotional initiatives linking health and recreation;
- Agreeing priorities for survey relating to visitor numbers;
- Building on existing litter and fly tipping campaigns.

These objectives and priorities are further elicited in the specific Recreation & Management Plan. However, setting aside this tourism specific objective, it is also important to note the remaining objectives as, essentially, these underpin all of the activities in the park.

***Recreation & Management Strategy 2010-2030 (NFNPA, 2010b)***

Produced by the NPA, this is an industry specific strategy. The strategy has been produced following extensive consultation with stakeholders and it provides the long term vision for recreation management for the 20 year period to 2030. It also outlines a series of actions for an interim 5 year period which are largely grouped around the following key themes:

- Active engagement between key stakeholder groups;
- Improving the accessibility of the Park for marginalised groups;
- Raising awareness and understanding about the importance of the national park;
- Developing sustainable recreational facilities in and around the Park boundaries;
- Promoting green infrastructure and minimising environmental damage;
- Managing visitor numbers through the limitation of car park spaces and facilities outside of villages.

The document is well structured and clearly outlines the present condition of the park by providing detailed background and contextual information. It is therefore easy to relate the objectives and priorities to its current state and thus, analyse the improvements required to achieve the overall vision. Furthermore, the priorities

outlined are all SMART and clearly identify the parties who have a key role in their achievement.

***Core Strategy & Development Management Policies (NFNPA, 2010c)***

The Core Strategy forms a key part of the overall Local Development Framework and outlines the planning policies for the National Park for the period to 2026. It is the first set of planning policies to be produced since the national park designation. It combines hundreds of policies from previous plans into 42 succinct policies which are intended to guide the overall development of the national park over the coming years. One such policy is specifically focused on tourism, outlining a core strategic objective to:

“Support development which encourages sustainable tourism and recreation and provide opportunities for enjoying the Park’s special qualities.”

(NFNPA, 2010c: p.57)

In achieving this objective, it outlines a policy which:

- supports small scale development of visitor facilities which use new and existing buildings, or through farm diversification;
- retains existing accommodation where it contributes to community sustainability; and
- supports opportunities to relieve visitor pressures which negatively impact the environment.

This objective and its supporting policies are closely aligned with the principles of sustainable tourism development. Furthermore, tourism’s inclusion in the Core Strategy means that the industry is being considered in line with other industries and sectors, highlighting its importance, but not dominance, within the local economy. At a practical level, the Core Strategy provides policies which are sufficiently detailed to enable actions against them yet do not appear to be overly restrictive in their nature.

***Our Future Together (NFDC, 1998)***

Whilst developed a number of years ago by the District Council, the principles underlying this strategy remain relevant today and the document is still widely available for stakeholder use. Its basic premise requires stakeholders to apply the VICE model;

where the four cornerstones of visitor management are: Visitors, Industry, Community and Environment. The latter half of the Strategy goes on to outline ways in which the successful tourism management can be achieved in the New Forest. One of the interviews conducted as part of this research was with a key stakeholder involved in producing this Strategy. He commented that, whilst the area has evolved, many of the actions for 'making it all work' remain relevant today to some extent and thus, the Strategy continues to be of use in guiding tourism development. Such actions include research, information provision, interpretation, signage, training, quality standards, marketing and effective planning.

***The Crown Lands Management Plan (FC, 2008)***

The Forestry Commission have developed their own Management Plan to guide their actions within the Crown Lands over a 5 year period. However, this is not an isolated document. The National Park Management Plan is given consideration within it and equally, when the Management Plan was drawn up, the thoughts of the Forestry Commission were given adequate consideration to ensure compatibility of objectives. The Crown Lands Management Plan outlines specific issues which currently impact the area and define policies and actions to realise these. The majority of these policies relate to environmental conservation and cultural heritage preservation however, one also specifically focuses on "Recreation and Community Objectives". Actions against this objective include engaging the community, increasing understanding of the area amongst visitors and increasing access for all groups of visitors; these are very much aligned with the NPA's tourism objectives.

***Other regional, national & international policies***

The importance of regional, national and international policies is articulated within the NPA strategies and plans. These require consideration to ensure that the NPA's strategies and objectives are aligned with broader objectives. This is particularly relevant for the New Forest given its close proximity to major expanding urban areas and other protected areas (NFNPA, 2010a). Through close working with neighbouring areas, the authority and stakeholders can learn from each other and identify areas of opportunity that may be exploited. In addition, it can also ensure that the New Forest

positively contributes to the wider economy and is able to respond to changes in the macro environment in a timely manner.

### 7.4.3 Stakeholder engagement

When asked to comment on the issue of stakeholder engagement, as stated above, most of the respondents noted that the biggest issue was in the sheer number of disparate groups, all with their own interests and priorities. This is further illustrated in the Recreation and Management Plan, which includes almost three pages of specific issues raised by some stakeholders and the polarised view offered by others. Examples of these can be seen in Table 7.2 below.

<p>Camping is a low impact, environmentally friendly activity that is very popular and enjoyed by thousands of people each year...There is a demand for improved and more permanent facilities.</p>	<p>Camping is an eye sore that damages the beauty of the New Forest landscape. It damages the ancient and ornamental woodlands in which it is located and creates litter, traffic, noise, mess and nuisance.</p>
<p>Walking is a popular, harmless and environmentally friendly way of enjoying the Forest and having a quiet close encounter with the New Forest’s natural environment.</p>	<p>There are too many people in the Forest and you can’t find solitude as you could in the old days.</p>
<p>Recreation is great for the Forest – people don’t cause a real problem; the area is not over crowded or anywhere near its carrying capacity and there is ample room for growth.</p>	<p>Recreation is a bad thing for the Forest – it’s generally too busy, it cause traffic congestion, brings in too many people and people are badly behaved and don’t respect the way of life of local people.</p>

**Table 7.2: An extract of polarised views on tourism development** (NFNPA, 2010b: p. 24-25)

The Recreation & Management Plan therefore notes that a key priority for the area is to “find practical ways of bridging gaps between different interests and working to resolve conflicts by finding the best possible outcomes.” (NFNPA, 2010b: p.26). It was noted by many respondents that there are already a significant number of engagement opportunities for all stakeholders and that:

“The only restriction of the stakeholder’s level of engagement is the stakeholder’s wish or ability to engage; there are no barriers to their engagement and they can get involved in anything they choose.”

(Respondent NF2)

It was noted that, to encourage greater levels of engagement, stakeholders need to feel that their opinions and input is valued. Thus, it was suggested that there was a need to make engagement processes more accessible. It was thought that this could be largely be achieved through the use of more personalised words– ‘resident’ rather than ‘community’ and ‘business’ rather than ‘industry’. In addition, they should be encouraged to communicate with common stakeholders and understand their different perspectives and priorities. Although it is likely that each will have slightly different stances, often they will have the same overall goals – for example, *all* businesses are ultimately concerned with turning a profit, it is just the manner in which they do this which differs. However, through collaborative working, they may be able to develop practices which are complementary, thus providing mutual benefits in the long run. At present however, some stakeholders will only participate if they see that it will directly benefit their profitability. They do not see the benefit of the investment of their time and resources, particularly if it is focussing on issues of sustainability and believe that engagement will be of relatively little use. One respondent expressed this in his interview:

“I am a small B&B and I don’t really see what use it would do me. I know that all these groups and forums exist but I think they are more geared towards larger businesses with lots of staff and turnover. I think it would just be a waste of my time really.”

(Respondent NF4)

Despite some stakeholder reticence, there are a large number of opportunities for engagement in tourism planning and management, as outlined below. Much like the Yorkshire Dales, the type of engagement methods used varies amongst stakeholder groups where applicable. This is highlighted within the following discussions.

### **Consultation**

As with the Yorkshire Dales, all policy and strategy documentation goes through a rigorous consultation process where a plethora of stakeholders are encouraged to contribute opinions and negotiate appropriate objectives. Details of consultations are published on the NPA's website allowing any interested party to contribute to discussions. In the case of the Management Plan, over 2000 drafts were widely distributed and more than 10,000 responses were received. This illustrates the level of interest key stakeholders have in the New Forest. Other processes involved in consultation include public meetings, working groups and one-to-one meetings with key organisations (NFNPA, 2010a).

### **Sector Group Networks & Steering Groups**

A key means of encouraging engagement amongst tourism businesses is through the development of sector group networks. These are operated by the NFTA and Council and encourage tourism businesses in similar sectors to work together, share best practice and collectively benefit from each others experience. Meetings are held on a monthly basis and enable the development of collaborative marketing, quality grading and broader planning. There is comprehensive sector coverage, with groups dedicated to: hotels, B&Bs & farmhouses, self catering houses, cottages & flats, camping & caravanning, attractions, transport and business tourism.

On a monthly basis, there are also steering groups which interact with businesses from all sectors and influence key decisions which impact the area as a whole e.g. deciding on universal marketing messages and areas for development *inter alia*.

### **Partnerships**

The NPA works in partnership with a vast majority of stakeholders. Many of these stakeholders sit on the Steering & Advisory Committee for the Recreation & Management Strategy and thus were actively involved in identifying relevant and appropriate objectives and priorities for the area. However, this Strategy is only a *direction* for the tourism industry. Its achievement is reliant on the work of other stakeholders and thus, a partnership approach is actively encouraged and realised within the New Forest. Even before the NPA was formed, a range of interested groups

worked together to develop a sustainable tourism industry and since its formation, the NPA has continued to promote this partnership approach. Largely, this involves the creation of a working dialogue between interested parties, whereby conflicts can be openly discussed to reach a common understanding. The Steering Group and Advisory Committee also have regular updates to assess progress against the Strategy objectives and Minutes from these meetings are available on the NPA's website.

### ***Community engagement***

It was noted amongst respondents that engaging communities in tourism was a far greater challenge than involving businesses and industry members. However, unlike many other tourist destinations, communities and residents in the New Forest are largely very passionate about the area and thus, have an interest in development issues and plans. The interview responses identified approximately 13 different physical communities within the New Forest. Methods of engagement include volunteering, interacting with tourists, participating in planning meetings and public consultations. However, the extent to which individuals actually engage varies according to their personality, length of residency and location within the park. Whilst some are happy to speak up and work with other key stakeholders, others prefer to take a back seat, even if they are disgruntled.

There is some variation in this. Given the high proportion of residents who also work in tourism in the park, there are a large number who can appreciate its significance to the area and specifically, the contribution it makes to the economy. They are often therefore keen to engage with planning and management as tourism affects them from two different fronts. For those not involved in tourism though, there is often some simmering tension particularly when visitor numbers peak in summer and the quieter areas of the Forest become less tranquil. It was noted by one respondent, that newer residents can be particularly difficult to engage with. These people were once tourists themselves but having moved to the New Forest, then become annoyed at the presence of tourism. Engaging this segment is therefore particularly important, to communicate the need for appropriate, sensitive tourism development and minimise any hostilities that may arise with tourists themselves.

### ***Payback Schemes***

In a similar manner as was seen in Chapter 6 for the Yorkshire Dales, the New Forest also operates a payback scheme, whereby visitors can directly contribute to the upkeep and conservation of the Forest. This is administered by the New Forest Trust, a charity whose aim is to “secure the wellbeing of the New Forest for those who live in it and for those who love it, now and in the future” (NFT, 2012). The ‘Love the Forest’ scheme enables visitors to add a small discretionary donation onto their accommodation, meal or drinks bills at participating establishments. The money is then used for sustainable projects, which historically have included issuing small grants to businesses, developing publicity for pony safety and establishing conservation programmes, e.g. monitoring bat movements.

#### **7.4.4 Educating visitors**

Interpretation forms a fundamental element of visitor education within the New Forest as evidenced by the completion of an Education and Interpretation Strategy by the NPA in 2007. However, visitor education is not only pursued by the NPA, but also other key stakeholders including the Verderers, the Forestry Commission and the New Forest Tourism Association. The methods used can largely be categorised under three headings: Education & Interpretation programmes, Leaflets and Codes of Conduct and personal interactions.

#### ***Education & Interpretation programmes***

The NPA are keen to increase the understanding of the Forest amongst the younger demographic and have developed an outreach programme aimed specifically at schools and youth groups. There is a dedicated Education Team based in Lyndhurst who develop suitable outreach sessions aimed at improving young people’s knowledge of the area and encouraging greater appreciation for the New Forest (NFNPA, 2012). As part of this process, they have developed a number of ‘Factsheets’ which are educational resources around key themes within the park including conservation, tourism, wildlife and the park history. These Factsheets are freely available on the website and in hard copy (at request) and thus are a useful tool not only for this demographic, but for all stakeholders wanting to learn more about the park.

### ***Leaflets & Codes of Conduct***

A significant number of leaflets and brochures promoting responsible visitor behaviour are produced by an array of stakeholders. These are widely available in the Visitor and National Park Centres around the New Forest and some are also distributed to accommodation providers to ensure that visitors see and are aware of them. One of the most common leaflets seen is the “5 Ways to Love the Forest”, which is produced by the NFTA (NFTA, nd). This essentially promotes slower driving, local produce, public transport and the use of ‘Green Leaf’ businesses. The visitors interviewed as part of this research had all seen this small leaflet and were aware of the key messages contained therein.

The Forestry Commission have designed a number of leaflets which outline Codes of Conduct for different user groups – dog walkers, cyclists, walkers and general users. In addition, they also provide leaflets about the ponies which encourage visitors to “Look but don’t touch”. Whilst all of these leaflets promote key messages and encourage appropriate behaviour, their relative use and effectiveness is somewhat questionable. As they are print materials, they require an individual to walk into a Visitor Centre, pick up the leaflet and subsequently read it. However, as noted by this visitor:

“We are only here for the day and we haven’t been to the Visitor Centre so haven’t really picked up any leaflets as yet. We might do later but as we’ve already been in the Forest all morning, perhaps there's not a lot of point.”

(Respondent NF16)

An alternative way of reaching visitors in the Forest is through the use of interpretation boards. These are placed at key visitor sites and provide information about the area and encourage appropriate visitor behaviour. However, again, the usefulness of these boards is questionable and the Forestry Commission respondent noted that, in relation to signs:

“In most cases, people just don’t want to know so they don’t bother reading them. They just want to get on and enjoy themselves. (Respondent NF3)

Instead, she noted that personal interactions were far more effective and thus, the Forestry Commission were attempting to increase the number of rangers available to converse directly with visitors on site.

### ***Personal Interactions***

As with the other forms of stakeholder engagement methods, visitor interactions are perceived to be more effective when they have an increased personal element. It was noted that one of the best methods of visitor education was through the direct interaction of visitors with Park Rangers. The Forestry Commission have Rangers out in the Forest on a daily basis and encourage them to interact with visitors and answer their questions wherever possible. Some larger car parks have Rangers stationed in or around them permanently to facilitate these relations. However, this is not a cheap method of engagement and there are a limited number of employees available to undertake this task. To ease the burden, the Forestry Commission are working with the NPA's Rangers to increase the provision of this service and also ensure that the same messages are being communicated by both parties.

## **7.5 Tourism impacts**

The NFNPA detail the main impacts of tourism within their Recreation Management Strategy and on their website. As with the Yorkshire Dales, these are presented in a relatively brief manner with little elicitation provided as to their relative importance amongst stakeholder groups. Interview respondents were therefore asked to comment upon the impacts which they felt were of significant importance. This data was then used to identify the main impacts which are discussed in the following subsections.

### **7.5.1 Employment**

Unlike the Yorkshire Dales, New Forest respondents specifically highlighted the benefits of the tourism industry to the local economy, particularly through income generation and employment opportunities. The NFDC (2012) state that over 7,890 jobs are directly and indirectly sustained by tourism within the local area. In addition, many of the tourism providers commented that their employees and colleagues largely resided in

the park. This has a reciprocal benefit for tourism development generally; the workers benefit from gaining employment however as they are residents in the park, they normally have an increased interest in sustainable tourism development as the impacts of the industry directly impact upon themselves and their communities. Amongst some interview respondents, this resulted in a real and deep passion for the national park area and in turn, generated a greater appreciation for sustainable tourism practices.

### **7.5.2 Impact on communities and daily life**

A significant proportion of visitors to the New Forest are local residents (NFNPA, 2007a). Thus the development of tourism facilities is largely perceived to benefit local inhabitants as well as tourists from further afield. However, this can also be perceived to be a negative impact, as one respondent noted that:

“Some residents perceive the Forest to be an extension of their back garden and get annoyed by the increasing number of visitors encroaching on ‘their’ space.” (Respondent NF1)

This can lead to some hostility between communities and visitors, particularly where tourism is perceived to be reducing the overall tranquillity and beauty of the destination as a whole. As will be discussed in greater detail in Section 7.5.5, this has led to some debate surrounding the appropriateness of the promotion of tourism in less populated areas of the park.

It was noted by many tourism provider respondents that hostilities between communities and tourists are less common now than they have been historically. This sentiment was echoed within the responses from residents themselves, who stated:

“I’ve lived here a long time and tourism has been here as long as I have so it doesn’t really bother me.” (Respondent NF11)

“I think anyone who has lived here a while and really understands the area should be able to appreciate the contribution that tourism makes. Tourists who behave properly and respect the Forest should always be welcome and it’s our

job to make them feel this way, so they come back and keep the economy alive". (Respondent NF12)

and

"Tourists don't really affect my day to day life, you just notice it's busier in summer and bank holidays, things like that. But you get used to the peaks and troughs and just work around it; it's just part of life in the Forest."

(Respondent NF10)

Due to the developed and longstanding tourism industry in the national park, on the whole, visitors' presence is tolerated, if not accepted by local inhabitants. However, there are times when their actions can negatively impact the lives and working practices of locals. This may be as simple as visitors inadvertently leaving gates open. However, perhaps the biggest concern is the increasing number of visitors who attempt to pet the ponies. Whilst the ponies belong to Commoners, essentially, in their behaviour, they are wild. However many visitors fail to acknowledge this and increasingly try to approach and feed them. This is a direct problem for the park managers from two fronts: firstly, it can detriment the ponies' health and secondly:

"the more people that feed them, the more they get used to it and expect to be fed. Then when they're not, they get angry and aggressive."

(Respondent NF3)

This sometimes results in ponies kicking or charging visitors and can be dangerous for those involved. Interpretation material has been developed by the national park to encourage visitors to "Look but don't touch" however given the abundance of mentions this issue received within the interviews, it would seem that this material is having limited success.

### **7.5.3 Traffic Related Issues**

Traffic and congestion have been highlighted as problems, particularly within honeypot sites. However, most interview respondents did not really attribute this directly to

visitor numbers *per se*. Whilst it was noted that car numbers inevitably increase in the peak tourism season, even outside of this, villages suffer some traffic congestion due to the layout of the villages and the high population density. Many of the villages have relatively narrow streets that are ill equipped to deal with high volumes of traffic. A prime example is Lyndhurst which:

“still maintains the original road layout that evolved from medieval tracks crossing through the village. This means that the two main road routes across the New Forest (A337 and A35) converge in the village centre.” (NFNPA, 2007b)

Given that 96% of visitors arrive into the forest via car, this issue is undoubtedly exacerbated by the presence of tourism. In addition, excessive, concentrated car volumes also lead to increased environmental pollution, particularly within the villages. However, other issues relating to car use in the park were noted to cause greater negative impacts, including the parking of cars on verges and the irresponsible driving which sometimes leads to animal deaths.

In relation to verge parking, this was noted as a particular concern by the Forestry Commission, due to their role as land managers for the majority of the open forestland. The ponies and cattle which are turned out on this land often graze along the roadsides, as can be seen in Figure 7.5. When cars park along the verges, considerable damage and erosion is caused to the grassland. This therefore reduces the grazing land available and forces the animals further into the Forest. It also causes disturbance to other wildlife, particularly ground nesting birds, by destroying ground level vegetation and interfering with breeding habits. In an attempt to mitigate these impacts on wildlife, the Forestry Commission have engaged in a programme whereby they create ditches at the side of the roads, making it impossible for cars to park there (North, 2013). However, this is an on-going management technique that is expensive and takes time to complete.



**Figure 7.5: A New Forest pony grazing along the roadside.**

***©Sarah Murphy***

In relation to animal deaths, it is estimated that over 100 ponies are killed a year due to irresponsible driving (NFNPA, 2012). The roads running through the main part of the Forest are limited to 40mph, particularly where ponies and other animals graze. In the villages and entranceways to the park, this limit is further reduced to 30mph. However, some visitors seem to disregard these limits and treat the roads as if they were standard highways, with a 60mph limit. This was observed first hand on the researcher's visit to the New Forest, where drivers clearly ignored the signs and warnings of animals grazing. Given their proximity to the roadside, it is clear that the animals can easily wander into the road and, particularly at night, may do so unseen.

#### **7.5.4 Trampling & erosion**

Alongside the environmental degradation caused by cars, the New Forest is also susceptible to erosion and trampling of vegetation from other forms of use. The Management and Recreation Strategy states that:

“the extent and severity of trampling and erosion depends on a number of factors including the type, timing and frequency of recreational activity, recovery times, vegetation and soil type, slope, aspect, prevailing weather and site history, wetness and water table levels and grazing pressures.”

(NFNPA, 2010b)

On this basis, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which visitor use impacts vegetation compared with the other forces at play. However, inevitably, the continued use of specific routes by visitors does make them increasingly susceptible to erosion.

From observation, Figure 7.6 provides an example of erosion within the Forest seen during the researcher’s stay in the park. This appears to have largely been caused by the pursuit of activities perceived to be sustainable, such as cycling, horse riding and walking as evidenced by footprints and hoof marks in the mud. However, it is the *extent* to which these activities are engaged in across the same patch of terrain which causes the environmental damage. This picture illustrates an area of natural landscape which now has a visible access way carved into it as a result of excessive use. Picture 7.6 is particularly concerning, given the widening of the degradation at the bottom of the picture. This is likely to have been caused by users widening their route to avoid muddy patches, but in doing so, ultimately increasing the area being eroded.



**Figure 7.6: Vegetation erosion caused by excessive use.**

***©Sarah Murphy***

### **7.5.5 Honeypot sites**

Thoughts amongst respondents on the presence of honeypot sites were divided. Whilst some considered them to be detrimental to the visitor experience due to the presence of congestion and overcrowding, others considered them necessary to preserve the tranquillity of other areas of the park.

During the field visit, it was observed that honeypot villages such as Lyndhurst provided a concentration of shops, cafes and other visitor facilities. Broadly, they appeared to provide a hub of activity and for new visitors in particular, this was considered useful as they were easily able to identify a location where they could obtain key services, e.g. cash machines. However, whilst this inevitably makes the area busy, from a tourism management perspective, it can facilitate the monitoring of activities and impact management. If the majority of visitors are flocking to these sites, planners and managers know to focus their attention and resources on these areas in particular. Conversely, if visitors are encouraged to disperse themselves more widely, this will just make quieter areas busier and these will then require greater levels of intervention and

management. However, this may be harder to achieve as the resources will be stretched more thinly to cover a wider area thus, leading to inefficiencies.

In providing such a concentration of services and facilities, the honeypot sites help to preserve the more remote areas of the park. This is necessary if the true visitor experience is to be protected and retained. One respondent commented that:

“For me, the national park is about wilderness and remoteness – to experience that you need less populated places.” (Respondent NF1)

Essentially, the research findings suggested that the protection of these tranquil and quaint areas is only achieved through the ‘sacrifice’ of honeypot sites. However, the danger is in visitors who come to the New Forest and only experience places like Lyndhurst and do not venture into the open forestland as this may damage the overall perception of the national park. Given the significance of word of mouth advertising and promotion, even these visitor experiences in the honeypots need to meet and exceed expectations.

### **7.5.6 Impact management & monitoring**

The Recreation & Management Strategy highlights the importance of monitoring progress against key objectives. This is currently being pursued, with varying degrees of success, through the following three methods: monitoring & controlling visitor numbers, the use of rangers and surveys and feedback.

#### ***Monitoring & controlling visitor numbers***

As with the Yorkshire Dales, there are no entrance gates to the New Forest National Park and visitors are free to come and go as they please. In addition, given the significant resident population, it is likely that a significant proportion of people pass through the area as part of their daily life, rather than as a visitor. This therefore makes visitor monitoring incredibly challenging.

The boundaries of the national park are delineated by roadside markers in a similar manner to those seen in the Yorkshire Dales. In addition however, the Forestry Commission also have markers, such as that seen in Figure 7.7, which shows the boundaries of the Crown Lands and the areas managed by the Forestry Commission.



**Figure 7.7: A Forestry Commission roadside boundary sign.**

***©Sarah Murphy***

Within the forestland, visitor numbers are monitored to some extent by the Forestry Commission staff and Rangers. Through the use of handheld, electronic and mechanical counters, staff members monitor the usage of small areas. In addition, environmental impact assessments provide some insight into popular routes and areas of the forest. Information relating to visitor numbers is also gleaned from different stakeholders, e.g. through hotel and accommodation providers. By working collaboratively, such information can then be collated to help identify key trends in visitor behaviour.

During peak times, some road diversions are actioned which direct visitors away from the busier areas. However, these only form recommendations and there are no actual

enforcements in place. For example, signs illuminate on the M27 guiding cars away from Lyndhurst and encouraging alternative entrances to the forest. However, such actions are reliant on the Councils who form the main highway authorities in the area and without their consent and co-operation, this management technique is not possible. To some extent however, control of visitor movement can be done through the provision and location of key facilities. For example, people will travel to areas where they can park, where there are toilets etc. At a more localised level, visitor movements within the Forest are largely unregulated, as visitors have open access to a vast percentage of the open forestland. However, the majority of visitors do tend to follow marked footpaths, trails and roads thus concentrating visitor use along the more popular routes.

### ***Rangers***

Both the Forestry Commission and NPA employ rangers to work practically within the Forest. These individuals are perceived to be “the eyes and ears of the Forest” (Respondent NF3). They have an excellent knowledge of the landscape, the vegetation and the wildlife that resides there. In some roles, it is a perquisite for Rangers to live on site to enable them easy access to the forestland and to enable on-going monitoring of changes in the environment. If problems are identified, they are able to temporarily close routes to enable remedial works to occur and the vegetation to recover. Any closed routes are publicised on the websites and clearly communicated in the National Park Centre.

### ***Surveys & Feedback***

The latest survey results which were fed into the Recreation & Management Strategy were from 2005. The Strategy included a specific priority to increase the collection of better quality visitor information that could be used to inform the review of the Strategy in 2015. Since 2005, evidence of visitor surveys found included the New Forest Visitor & Resident Survey in September 2011 which was conducted collaboratively between the Forestry Commission and the NPA (NFNPA, nd). As yet, there is no evidence of the results being incorporated into planning or management practices however, it is expected that the results will be used going forward.

## 7.6 Understanding sustainable tourism development

The tourism industry has long supported the notion of sustainable tourism, actively promoting the concept amongst tourism businesses long before the area was designated as a national park. Yet, despite its widespread use in marketing, as noted in Section 7.3 above, the actual term 'sustainable tourism' does not even feature within the NPA's Recreation Management Strategy. However, the concept and its principles as they are understood by the research, is articulated throughout the entire document. For example, whilst not specifically calling it 'sustainable tourism', the introduction states that the document's purpose is to:

“ensure that, at a strategic level, outdoor recreation operates in as sustainable a way as possible, ensuring that it functions within environmental limits whilst optimising the social and economic benefits it can bring”. (NFNPA, 2010b)

This latter half of the sentence, in essence, is a definition of sustainable tourism. Furthermore, whilst the principles of the concept are not directly stated, they are indirectly referred to throughout the Strategy. An explicit outline of these principles features in the Tourism Impact Factfile which has been developed as interpretation material by the NPA. Table 7.3 shows the principles encouraged by the NPA, which have been borrowed from the Department of Employment's definition (NFNPA, 2007d).

- The environment has an intrinsic value which outweighs its value as a tourism asset.
- Tourism should be recognised as a positive activity, with the potential to benefit the community and the place as well as the visitor.
- The relationship between tourism and the environment must be managed so that the environment is sustainable in the long term.
- Tourism activities should respect the scale, nature and character of the place in which they are sited.
- In any location harmony must be sought between the needs of the visitor, the place and the host community.
- In a dynamic world, some change is inevitable and change can often be beneficial.

**Table 7.3: The principles of sustainable tourism promoted by the NFNPA (NFNPA, 2007d)**

As with the Yorkshire Dales, many of the other stakeholders do not directly provide definitions of sustainable tourism, despite their wide use of the concept. However, perhaps in the case of the New Forest, this is not surprising. Given that sustainable tourism has been actively pursued for a prolonged period in the area, it may simply be assumed that the terminology is already understood. Indeed, having examined the websites of key stakeholders identified, although no definitions are offered, the principles are largely encouraged. For example, the NFTA recognise the special qualities of the area and actively seek to conserve these for the future, whilst also promoting the destination as an ideal year round venue and working with key partners to generate a better understanding of the industry.

### **7.6.1 Personal definitions**

All of the respondents interviewed, including the visitors, clearly understood the meaning of sustainability and were able to articulate many of the principles within the definitions they provided. Specifically, many highlighted the multidimensional nature of the concept, the need for balance and appropriate development to ensure the long term survival of the resource base. This is evidenced in the following example definitions offered:

“Sustainable tourism maintains the offer that a destination has for future generations so it’s all about visitors coming along and experiencing and enjoying the national park and other visitor destinations, not destroying them, not necessarily taking anything away with them and leaving it in a state that others can enjoy in the future.”  
(Respondent NF1)

“Trying to create a balance between the needs of people, the environment and the need to turn over a buck or two....there are only two things in the world, people and place and to allow people to exist, we’ve come up with this idea of economy and therefore you need to make the three things balance if we’re to have a world which has a future.”  
(Respondent NF2)

“It’s about encouraging tourism that doesn’t damage the landscape and making sure it lasts for future generations.”

(Respondent NF16)

“I would say it’s looking to the future. Making sure the things we do today are not going to have negative impacts and potentially you’re actually improving things into the future so it’s not necessarily always staying the same.”

(Respondent NF3)

“To me, it’s about getting that balance between tourists and communities and businesses and making sure that we all work together for the good of the Forest”.

(Respondent NF12)

“It’s making an industry that contributes to everything locally, so adding to the quality of life of locals, protecting the ponies and wildlife and the Forest and making sure the money is spent on the right things.”

(Respondent NF7)

“I think mostly it refers to tourism which is appropriate for the Forest, so not building a massive Hilton in the middle of the Brockenhurst, but encouraging the little businesses which have been here for years and hopefully will be for years to come. At the same time though, it’s helping those businesses adapt to changes, so encouraging recycling and the use of local produce, things like that.”

(Respondent NF10)

Unlike the Yorkshire Dales, there was no clear distinction between the definitions given by those who consume and those who produce tourism: both segments displayed relatively similar understandings of the concept. This implies that visitors are already educated about the importance of sustainable tourism and have a clear understanding of what it means within the New Forest context. One respondent did however comment that:

“I think that everybody has got a broad understanding of what sustainability means. I think when you move off of the broad definition of sustainability and

take it into sustainable development, sustainable tourism, sustainable X, Y and Z, that can create confusion. I think the word sustainable in its own right is acceptable and understood but I think that sustainable 'something' can be difficult.” (Respondent NF1)

However, equally, the same respondent noted that:

“Here at the New Forest, we are quite fortunate because we have been involved in sustainable tourism for a long time, even before the National Park existed so we've been *practising* sustainable tourism for over 20 years so I think that's a term that is well accepted in the New Forest...it's a term that is well known and well recognised .” (Respondent NF1)

The NPA and broader industry actively work with the terminology of sustainable tourism and, as highlighted in section 7.3 above, the area is almost universally marketed as a sustainable tourism destination. This comfort with the phrasing amongst stakeholders is, to some extent, likely to explain the lack of immediate differences noted within the definitions given by the interview respondents in this research. It may imply that visitors are receiving effective and consistent messages within communications which are helping to develop a common understanding of the phrase. However, given the small number of respondents interviewed here, this is a somewhat crude interpretation and more research would be required to ascertain if this is indeed the case.

In addition, some respondents' comments suggested that difficulties can sometimes arise when the sustainability label is applied into new and different contexts. Some stakeholders noted that, if this occurs, the bases of the concept may still underpin their work even though the use of the word 'sustainability' is dropped. Thus, whilst practices are in line with broader principles, the difficulty seems to arise from the 'labelling' of the concept; the same issue which was highlighted within the Yorkshire Dales. To minimise this issue, some stakeholders have therefore opted to 'drop' the sustainability word and instead use phrases such as 'wise tourism' which are generally better received (Respondent NF2).

### **7.6.2 Sustainability: a realistic goal?**

The importance of the concept of sustainability to the New Forest National Park was stressed by all of the tourism practitioner respondents. The National Park brand provides signalling to the general public that the area is a flagship for sustainable practices and, through effective marketing, it attempts to generate positive connotations within visitors minds. Thus, all activities and industries developed in the area must be sustainable. For tourism in particular, which, at a broader level is an industry perceived to be accompanied by negative impacts, this is of vital importance. Due to the nature of the tourism offering within the park, *all* tourism developments must be sustainable in order for them to be developed effectively and receive appropriate support from other stakeholders.

However, the concept of sustainability is not something which is perceived to be an achievable 'end state'. The environment within the Forest is constantly evolving and the practices of businesses and behaviour of visitors and communities need to adapt with it. Plans therefore need to be "organic" and flexed as the 'goalposts' of sustainability constantly move. However, as a consequence:

"It's not necessarily something which is achieved but it's a way in which you can change what you're doing to the best effect into the future."

(Respondent NF3)

Thus, the extent to which it is even achievable appears to be a somewhat irrelevant debate. Indeed, one respondent commented:

"So it's not achievable, so what? That doesn't mean we shouldn't try. Ultimately, at least in the trying, even if we don't achieve it, we end up in a better place than we would if we didn't. That's why we should do it. It's got absolutely nothing to do with whether it is achievable or not."

(Respondent NF2)

These thoughts were largely echoed amongst other stakeholders, who perceived sustainable tourism and broader sustainability to be a means of achieving a desired end result, rather than the end result itself.

However difficulties continue to arise in determining what is and is not sustainable. One of the greatest challenges in the New Forest is the lack of agreement amongst stakeholders over the relative importance of tourism impacts. Whilst consultation processes can help to derive common goals and understanding of concepts, it was noted by many that how individual stakeholders view the impacts will inevitably differ to some extent due to their unique stances. In particular, common conflicts arise surrounding the understanding of “what the Forest can sustain” (Respondent NF3) and the extent to which individual projects are viewed as sustainable or not.

Furthermore, many discussions in interviews centred on the conservation and preservation of the environment. Indeed, one stakeholder in particular noted that, whilst a balance is required and actively sought, this is currently heavily weighted towards the environmental dimensions of sustainable development, to the neglect of economic and social elements. Given the importance attached to the landscape and the environment and its centrality to the tourism offering in the New Forest and other protected areas, this is not particularly surprising. However, sustainable development is about:

“An equitable relationship between the environment, the people and their economic activities - that is what sustainability is about but mostly people go on about the environment but, is there any point in having a great environment if there are no people?” (Respondent NF2)

## **7.7 Conclusion**

Although the New Forest National Park is a relatively new construct, the area is characterised by its historical and cultural heritage. Despite its name, only a small proportion of the New Forest is actually tree covered, with the majority being open forestland owned by the Crown. Various ancient traditions and customs have survived for centuries in this area and, principle amongst these is the act of Commoning, which

involves locals grazing their cattle and ponies on the Crown Lands. The presence of these ponies provides one of the key attractions of the area and millions of people visit the National Park each year.

The New Forest has various honeypot sites, which provide concentrated areas of tourism facilities. Lyndhurst, in particular, is termed 'the capital of the New Forest' and attracts a substantial number of visitors every year. Whilst this can result in various negative impacts such as congestion and overcrowding, it also protects the rural tranquillity of less visited areas, thus helping to preserve the 'true National Park experience'.

One of the key challenges of sustainable tourism development is the number of stakeholders with a vested interest in the New Forest. Alongside the 35,000 residents, there are numerous businesses, charities, landowners and business associations, all of whom have different priorities and interpretations of visitor impacts. Three of the most prominent stakeholders are the National Park Authority, the District Council and the Forestry Commission. Unlike the Yorkshire Dales, it is the District Council who provide the lead authority for tourism development in the New Forest. The NPA merely coordinate the key planning documents whilst the Forestry Commission are primarily concerned with practical land management of the Crown Lands. The three organisms therefore have very different remits yet, through collaborative working, strive to achieve the overall purpose of the National Park.

The New Forest tourism industry is predominantly made up of locally owned businesses, with many employees also living in the locality. The passion for the area amongst residents is clearly visible however, this has led to conflicts arising when polarised views are expressed. The process of stakeholder engagement is therefore of upmost important in the park, to ensure that conflicts are minimised and suitable sustainable tourism is developed which benefits all categories of stakeholder. To ensure this is achieved, the District Council adopt a VICE model, with puts Visitors, Industry, Communities and the Environment at the forefront of all planning and management processes.

Levels of engagement vary amongst different stakeholder groups however, it was largely determined by respondents that encouraging participation required some form of personalisation so that stakeholders felt that their opinions were truly valued. At its most basic level, this could involve the use of more personal vocabulary that people could relate to. However, at a practical level in the Forest, this also included the increased use of rangers to directly interact with visitors, as opposed to an over reliance on printed interpretation material.

Stakeholder engagement has also enabled the development of a unified understanding of sustainable tourism development. This was evidenced by the respondents interviewed in this research, who were all able to express similar interpretations of the concept. However, it was noted that some stakeholders still struggle with the use of the term itself, despite understanding the underlying principles. This is the same issue as was noted in the Yorkshire Dales. However, setting aside this 'labelling' issue, in practical terms, sustainable development clearly seems to be providing the New Forest with a long term tourism development option. Whilst it was acknowledged that this will never be an achievable 'end state' this was of no consequence, because as one respondent noted:

“Ultimately, at least in the trying, even if we don't achieve it, we end up in a better place than we would if we didn't.” (Respondent NF2)

## Chapter 8

### DISCUSSION

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#### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the main analysis and discussion for the research. It compares the findings from both case studies presented in the preceding two chapters, with existing theories and notions which were outlined in the earlier literature review. In doing so, the analysis aims to make a contribution to existing knowledge. Throughout the chapter, the issue of context is regularly referred to and where applicable, the differences between the two case studies are highlighted to illustrate this. In general however, the approach that follows is to consider the results of both contexts in unison and present the findings on a theme by theme basis. It is clearly evident from stakeholder responses and secondary data sources that the notion of sustainable tourism is of great importance within the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest national parks. Both destinations actively market themselves as 'sustainable tourism' destinations and the principles of the concept feature heavily in planning and management processes. Section 8.2 therefore begins by assessing the theoretical understanding of the concept amongst stakeholders within the two national parks.

The principles of sustainable tourism development which were derived from literature and outlined in Chapter 2 have been re-organised thematically under 6 main headings: futurity, equity & stakeholder engagement, impact management, multidimensionality, developing a quality tourism product and integrated planning and management. Each of these themes is thus analysed in turn and forms the dominant proportion of this chapter within section 8.3. Section 8.4 of the chapter then moves on to consider how the notion of sustainable tourism development is embedded into planning and management processes within the specific contexts of this research.

One of the fundamental issues relating to sustainable tourism development is the importance of context and thus, whilst the discussions in this chapter begin by focusing specifically on the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest, the final section of the chapter

takes a broader stance. By drawing on the findings, it presents two models which contribute to existing literature in this field; the first of which presents a theoretical framework to facilitate the overall evaluation of sustainable tourism development in national parks. The literary fields which form the foundation of this research are vast and complex and the model seeks to facilitate avenues of analysis through these discourses by outlining the key characteristics of the fundamental aspects underlying the concept. The second model is intended for the practical use by park planners and managers and provides an overview of the key elements required to progress destinations towards sustainable tourism development. Both models highlight the importance of context, meaning and practical application and thus, directly align with the key objectives of this research.

## **8.2 Theoretical understanding**

Both the Yorkshire Dales and New Forest have well established tourism industries and actively promote themselves as sustainable tourism destinations. Yet, despite the widespread adoption of the principles behind the concept by individual stakeholders and organisations, there remains some confusion about the meaning of the term. Existing literature attributes the difficulties in understanding the concept to its vague definition and lack of a unified approach which results in individuals applying their own interpretation (Liu, 2003; McMinn, 1997; Wall, 1997b; Welford et al, 1999). To some extent this is evident within these two contexts. Whilst attempts are made at both sites to engage visitors and outline common objectives, e.g. through the formation of policy documents, differences in understanding can still be observed within the definitions offered by the respective stakeholders groups. Within the Yorkshire Dales particularly, a clear distinction was visible between the consumers and producers of tourism. However, this was not so much in the elements of the definition, but in their ability to define the concept at all. Visitors in particular struggled with the terminology surrounding the concept and seemed thwarted by the mere word 'sustainability'. Yet, when engaged in discussions surrounding the underlying principles, they were clearly able to articulate the broader meaning of the concept. The difficulty therefore seems to lie in the labelling of the concept.

The responses to this lack of understanding by the two National Park Authorities have been somewhat different. The Yorkshire Dales clearly articulate a definition and outline specific principles for the notion, including these on its website and within the area's tourism strategy. The New Forest however, do not provide such a definition and the term 'sustainable tourism' does not even appear within their Recreation and Management Strategy although older interpretation material does contain such information. Indeed, respondents in the New Forest noted that there had been a general shift away from the use of the term 'sustainable tourism' in formal documents and strategies due to the difficulties that have arisen as a result of the terminology. Thus, other terms can be increasingly observed, such as 'wise', 'responsible' and 'green'. This difficulty in terminology perhaps adds credence to the criticism the term receives for being a 'buzzword' (Lélé, 1991). Indeed, it is somewhat concerning that some stakeholders disengaged with the concept due to the use of the 'sustainable' label and it is understandable that many stakeholders within industry are consequently seeking alternative terms.

However, despite the issues with terminology, the concept itself remains valid and the bases continue to be central to the development of the tourism industry. Literature suggests that definition is relatively inconsequential and focus has therefore shifted onto the importance of identifying its key principles and seeking to 'move' tourism enterprises towards the goal of sustainability (Clarke, 1997; Liu, 2003). Indeed, this stance is supported by the respondents at both destinations who consider that the underlying notions of multidimensionality and 'balance' are of utmost important. However, the challenge in practice is in determining the extent to which products and impacts can be deemed sustainable and, in light of this, the identification of appropriate and specific objectives. As is highlighted in literature, sustainable tourism is very much a contextual concept and relative 'trade-offs' between the key elements need to be determined in light of the unique environmental, social and cultural circumstances in which they are being applied (Bramwell & Lane, 1993a; Hunter, 1997). However, in addition, variations also occur within and between stakeholders due to their differing priorities (McMinn, 1997). This was specifically noted amongst the research findings and, as will be discussed in further detail in section 8.3.1, one of the

key challenges in practice is determining appropriate trade-offs in order to establish equitable relationships between the environment, society and the economy.

One of the most interesting discussions with respondents related to the relative 'usefulness' of the concept due to its inability to be achieved. Given the on-going fluidity of the national park environment and the constant evolution amongst and within the society, environment and economy, achieving a 'balanced state' is near impossible. There was therefore widespread agreement amongst interview respondents that the concept of sustainable tourism development should not be viewed as an end goal but should instead be perceived to be an on-going process. This viewpoint is also articulated by Eagles et al (2002), Kuo (2003) and Sharpley (2009a). Consequently, it has received some criticism for being something of an 'empty rhetoric' and little more than a 'marketing gimmick' (Müller, 1994; Hardy et al, 2002; Wall, 1997a). However, the inability to achieve sustainable tourism development was considered irrelevant by many of the respondents. They considered the strength of the concept to be its provision of a framework for practical actions which could progress the destination towards sustainable tourism. It provides a process of change 'for the better' and, thus, whilst some may consider it impossible, in striving for its achievement, ultimately the destination should end up in a better place than if they had not tried at all. This applies to all scales of tourism enterprise and all stakeholders involved in the industry. Indeed, this sentiment reflects the current convergence approach to sustainable tourism which acknowledges the need for *all* tourism enterprises to strive for sustainability, regardless of their scale (Clarke, 1997).

The findings of this research suggest that the theoretical debate surrounding sustainable tourism development is becoming somewhat redundant due to a lack of progress on the ground. If the concept is to be realised in specific contexts and be more than rhetoric, a more pragmatic approach needs to be adopted. In essence, despite the definitions proposed by academics and, in some instances, imposed by destination managers, the concept of sustainable tourism development is entirely subjective and thus will inevitably mean different things to different people in different situations. Rather than forcing a specific definition which lacks comprehension, stakeholders should be encouraged to adopt a more flexible, fluid approach to interpretation and,

through effective interaction and collaborative working, will then be more likely to arrive at a broadly accepted term which can then be effectively operationalised.

### **8.3 The principles of sustainable tourism development**

Whilst for the most part, the principles of sustainable tourism development were not specifically listed by stakeholders, the definitions included in documents and the understanding proffered by interview respondents highlighted the main elements which are included in existing literature. For example, the majority included the need for a balance amongst the economy, society and the environment; the need for long term consideration within planning; the requirement for consideration of other industries and the need for sensitive and appropriate planning. Thus, as is suggested by Boyd (2000) and Eagles & McCool (2000) amongst others, the notion of sustainable tourism development was broadly perceived to be compatible with the national park environment. In particular, it was thought that the statutory purpose of national parks lends itself well to the notion of sustainable tourism development, as ultimately, they are concerned with the provision of recreational access whilst considering the needs of the environment and communities present therein. Tourism is not a smokeless industry and inevitably is accompanied by resource consumption and degradation (McKercher, 1993). However, through integrated and appropriate planning and management, the negative impacts can be mitigated and opportunities identified for future benefits. This will ensure that only appropriate development which is sensitive to the natural environment and 'fits' with the national park remit is pursued.

To be effective, the principles of sustainable tourism development need to underpin planning and management processes. To evaluate the extent to which this is currently done in the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest, the principles outlined in Chapter 2 and drawn from various literature sources have been revisited and six key themes have been identified: futurity, equity & stakeholder engagement, impact management, multidimensionality, developing a quality tourism product and reactive management. In order to encourage progress towards sustainable tourism development, a balanced approach needs to be adopted between these six themes, with each given adequate consideration in tourism planning and management processes. The manner in which

each of these themes has been explored and integrated into planning and management in the Yorkshire Dales and New Forest is considered in the following sub-sections.

### **8.3.1 Equity & stakeholder engagement**

One of the underlying tenets of sustainable tourism development is the equitable provision of tourism. This is interpreted here to mean that the benefits associated with tourism development should be distributed 'equally' amongst the stakeholders involved in the industry and between the central elements which form the concept: the economy, the environment and society. Sustainable tourism development is a highly contextual concept and thus, the relative 'balance' between these principles is entirely subjective between stakeholders (McMinn, 2007; Sharpley, 2009a). Both the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest have a considerable number of stakeholders with a vested interest in the national park. They each have a leading authority that attempts to coordinate the actions of these stakeholders, specifically through the development of appropriate plans and policies. However, this process can be thwarted by the difficulties encountered in identifying and engaging the relevant stakeholder groups. Whilst respondents acknowledged the need to ascertain common goals and objectives, they also noted that this remains a significant challenge due to the disparate goals and priorities of different stakeholder groups. Indeed, due to the heterogeneity of host communities, it is somewhat inevitable that disagreements occur when deciding which elements of sustainable tourism development should be emphasised (McMinn, 1997).

To minimise conflicts and facilitate more effective planning, it is recommended that as many stakeholders as possible be 'invited to the planning table'. This ensures that an equitable approach is adopted which gives all relevant individuals the chance to explain their stance and voice their perspective (Bramwell & Lane, 2000b; Manning, 1999; Twining-Ward, 1999). Both the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest have extensive consultation programmes when outlining their policy and strategy documents. The processes include public meetings, working groups, one to one engagement and community feedback sessions. However, these processes are both lengthy and expensive and the resulting documents, as considered in each of the results chapters, largely outline vague objectives and actions which are of minimal use to most

stakeholders. However, this vagueness could be argued to be a strength or a weakness. Its strength lies in its provision as a guiding principle for the agents of tourism and thus, should help to provide some direction for tourism development. However, its weakness is that it provides ambiguity, which could ultimately lead to individuals interpreting the objectives differently or, perhaps more worryingly, lead to them ignoring them altogether. By encouraging a greater number of stakeholders to participate in policy formation, more individuals have the opportunity to explain their stance, put forward their own priorities and engage in a process of negotiation. Whilst a 'balance' between objectives will never be achieved in its most literal sense, the priorities of individuals can be 'fine-tuned' and appropriate 'trade-offs' undertaken to determine overall goals which are acceptable to all and which are in line with the overall national park remit (Farrell, 1992; Farrell & Marion, 2002; Jamal & Stronza, 2009).

To overcome some issues, both national parks encourage partnership working, which specifically emphasises a collaborative approach. This instils a sense of ownership into planning and management practices and encourages individuals to take responsibility for their actions (Bramwell & Lane, 200a; Eagles et al, 2002; Jamal & Stronza, 2009; Thomas et al, 2003). In the case of these two national parks, these engagement methods are particularly significant. Whilst the main tourism strategy documents and plans are co-ordinated and produced by the lead tourism authorities, these organisations have relatively little power to action the objectives themselves. Although they can identify appropriate management practices, they cannot actually physically implement them as they do not own the land themselves. The deliverance against objectives is therefore heavily reliant on other stakeholders, particularly the landowners and thus, a partnership approach is not only recommended but is imperative. In the case of these two national parks, planners and managers are not necessarily the same people however, by working together, a dialogue can be created which involves the negotiation of common goals which are acceptable to all and ensure that everyone is pulling in the same direction (Bramwell & Lane, 200a; Haukeland, 2011).

Both the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest also have a variety of industry networks in place. Theory suggests that networks can benefit businesses through the pooling of

resources and specifically, the shared knowledge and expertise which can enable greater efficiencies to be achieved together than could be individually (Wray, 2011). Within the Yorkshire Dales, a new, free 'Dales Tourism Network' has been established which provides guidance and advice for all tourism businesses. The New Forest meanwhile, has a number of sector specific networks which enable businesses which are broadly similar to learn from each other. This latter approach seems particularly beneficial given the vast scale and multidimensionality of the industry.

Whilst it was widely acknowledged that there was ample opportunity for engagement in both contexts, it was also noted that there were various difficulties encountered in encouraging interactions amongst some stakeholder groups. These varied between the parks. In the Yorkshire Dales, the locality of residents and their respective level of interactions with tourism largely affected their interest in consultation processes. Whilst in the New Forest, it was specifically mentioned that smaller tourism businesses were less concerned with engagement when they did not see the personal benefit it would have for them. Indeed, this latter issue is of particular significance. A number of respondents in the New Forest believed that engagement would be more effective if it encompassed a greater degree of personalisation. This might involve the use of different, more personal terminology, e.g. using the term 'resident' rather than 'community' or 'business' rather than 'industry'. As ultimately, the local residents are all residents, even if they do not perceive themselves to be in a community and similarly, the businesses are businesses, even if they cannot understand their position in broader industry. It was thought that such personalisation may increase the feeling of being 'valued' and thus, reduce the perception that contributions are a 'waste of time'.

Setting aside the notions of stakeholder engagement and moving back towards equity, it is also important to consider how the benefits of tourism are equitably accessible to all potential visitors. Whilst both national parks have a prime demographic which has been determined based on past research and who remain the predominant target market, they have also developed outreach programmes which are concerned with increasing the accessibility of the area to marginalised populations. Given their rural nature and heavy situation in the natural environment, somewhat inevitably, both

national parks have accessibility issues for some visitor groups, e.g. those with mobility issues or push chair users. The outreach programmes have involved very small numbers however, the tourism strategies in both locations outline improvements to accessibility as a key objective for the coming years. This therefore illustrates the importance of widening the market base to enable a greater number of visitors to access and enjoy the national parks.

### **8.3.2 Futurity**

The notion of futurity largely refers to the industry's consideration of the needs of future generations (WCED, 1987). The most obvious examples of futurity consideration in both national parks are evidenced through the production of long term strategy and policy documentation. In particular, the statutory requirement for UK national parks to provide a detailed Management Plan obliges them to outline a clear vision for the area in the future. As noted in section 8.3.1, a multitude of stakeholders are actively engaged in outlining key policy documents and thus, in order to determine this vision and the objectives required to achieve it, they must have considered the future position and requirements of the park. However, whilst some of these documents are intended to cover a number of years, they by no means span generations.

Of specific importance in relation to futurity is the quality of the environment which should be preserved for the future. Pearce et al's (1989) comments about the importance of natural capital and the minimisation of environmental exploitation are particularly significant within the contexts of national parks. Not only does environmental conservation form one element of the dual remit for the areas, but it is also central to the tourist experience and broader economy. Unsurprisingly, environmental protection and conservation features heavily on many stakeholder agendas and the national parks provide both 'hard' and 'soft' visitor management techniques aimed at preserving the natural environment. Often, the most challenging stakeholder groups to involve are the visitors themselves and both the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest have extensive interpretation programmes aimed at highlighting the importance of the environment and the need for conservation. Indeed, such methods are deemed vital in order to create 'mindful visitors' who behave responsibly

and appreciate the natural environment, thus ensuring its survival in the long term (Moscardo, 1996; Tubb, 2003; Vaske et al, 2000). In addition, specific projects such as 'payback schemes' directly enable visitors to contribute to practical conservation projects and clearly see how their monetary contribution is spent.

One of the key challenges in relation to futurity is the 'quick buck mentality' of the tourism industry (Cronin, 1990). The majority of tourism businesses in both case studies are small, family run institutions which support only a small proportion of local residents. Thus, whilst many appreciate the importance of environmental sustainability, their precedence is often the need for profitability to support themselves. Changing the mindset of the business owners is challenging. Both national parks have attempted this through the support of partnership approaches and network development, which enables businesses to work together and benefit from shared expertise and 'best practice'. However, whilst some have been happy to engage in such forms of collaboration, others clearly are either constrained by resources or do not see the benefit in committing their time to such collaborative practices, particularly if they focus on issues of sustainability. The barriers to engagement here thus results from a lack of understanding surrounding the benefits of the principles of sustainability and the need for the industry to adopt a unified approach. In opting not to engage in collaborative processes even when they are free, businesses are ultimately choosing to take a singular approach and this may result in conflicts between the objectives of different stakeholders. However, given that the development of the mutual understanding of the concept is often thought to be achieved through effective communication within stakeholder engagement (Jamal & Stronza, 2009), if they are not willing to engage in the first place, this adds an additional layer of complexity to planning and management. As stated above in section 8.3.1, there is therefore a need to find alternative ways to engage businesses and this could potentially be sought through more personalised approaches.

### **8.3.3 Impact management**

Prior to determining appropriate objectives within planning documents, there is a need for impact assessment to determine the areas which are particularly vulnerable to

intensive visitor use and thus, require careful management (Eagles & McCool, 2000). A large number of impacts were identified in Chapter 4, having been drawn from existing case studies within national parks. Although these are largely contextual, many of them were also observed and noted within the Yorkshire Dales and New Forest. Specifically, both national parks suffered from issues of congestion, wildlife disturbance, erosion and traffic related problems. Largely, the impacts highlighted related to environmental issues and, given the centrality of the environment to the tourism experience and the area as a whole, this is not surprising. However, also of increasing concern was the impact of tourism on the communities within the national park. The increasing presence of second home ownership within the Yorkshire Dales is detracting from the overall community feel of the destination and this in itself, is detrimental to the visitor experience, thus adding credence to the notion that tourism is bearing the seeds of its own destruction (McCool & Moisey, 2008). In the New Forest meanwhile, visitor presence is more of an annoyance to locals, who are inconvenienced in their day to day activities through visitors' irresponsible behaviour, e.g. through the petting of ponies and leaving gates open.

The approaches to visitor management in both national parks largely appear to be more reactive than proactive. However, this may be due to the long term establishment of the industry. It is likely that the introduction of planning and management techniques would largely have commenced after the tourism industry was already present and resulting in negative impacts. However, it was interesting to note that none of the planning documents perused as part of this research concerned themselves with the notion of carrying capacity and nor did they provide any direct zoning initiatives within the boundaries of the park. However, whilst interesting, it is not particularly surprising. The idea of determining a 'magic number' of visitors is not easily put into practice and represents a reductionist approach to tourism impacts (Farrell & Marion, 2002; McCool & Lime, 2001). In addition, given that one of the core remits of national parks is to provide recreational access, limiting visitor numbers would "betray one of the founding principles of the park system" (Butler, 2000: p.334).

Theory suggests that both 'hard' regulatory visitor management and 'soft' educational techniques are most effective when used together (Kuo, 2003; Mason, 2005). It is not

surprising then that evidence of both methods can be found within the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest. In relation to the former, the hard approaches are normally taken to refer to the adaptation of the resource itself. However, the extent to which this can be done within national parks is limited. Normally, such adaptation might involve site hardening or relocation of facilities (Cahill et al, 2008; Marion & Leung, 2004) however, due to the fragility of the natural environment and the heavy restrictions on planning and development, this is often not possible. As a consequence, in many instances, 'hard' visitor management thus often only consists of reparation work to areas, to restore vegetation and repair damage caused by excessive use. In both case studies, this included closing routes to enable paths to be resurfaced following significant erosion. However, such 'hard' techniques need to be sensitive and in keeping with the environment and therefore often require the use of locally sourced materials and the need for time, to allow vegetation regrowth.

In addition, 'soft' management techniques and particularly, interpretation forms a cornerstone of visitor management in both case study sites. Bushell (2003) suggests that many of the negative impacts of tourism are not attributable to visitor numbers *per se*, but rather to ineffective management and irresponsible visitor behaviour. Indeed, Müller (1994) suggests that visitors' often prioritise their enjoyment of a destination over any detrimental impacts that their presence and actions may have. Thus, interpretation may often be perceived to be a panacea for addressing the negative impacts of tourism (Tubb, 2003; Vaske et al, 2000) as it provides the opportunity to educate visitors about the national park environment and encourage more responsible behaviour (Moscardo, 1996; Orams, 1995; Staiff et al, 2002). The primary forms of interpretation in the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest include the use of interpretation boards, National Park Centres and printed materials such as brochures, leaflets and notices. However, respondents noted that such methods are not always effective. It was noted that signs and interpretation boards are often ignored by visitors who are primarily concerned with their enjoyment on site whilst, printed material is only useful if it is collected, read and used. Given that the majority of this media is provided in National Park Centres, this is therefore reliant on visitors attending these Centres at the outset of their visit – something which does not always occur. In addition, the substantial amount of interpretation material can be somewhat

overwhelming. Baylis (1993) suggests that the danger of the 'overzealous appetite for interpretation' results in a reduced visitor experience however, it can also lead to ignorance of messages due to the significant proliferation of material. In the New Forest in particular, there was media from a number of different stakeholders, promoting appropriate behaviour and codes of conduct amongst visitors. Whilst largely these all espoused the same types of behaviours, the proliferation of media available was deemed to be 'off putting' and therefore often ignored.

As with other forms of stakeholder engagement, it was therefore suggested that in order to be effective, interpretation and education needs to adopt a more personal stance, to directly engage the visitors and instil an appreciation for the national park. Within the New Forest, such methods are being encouraged, through the use of National Park rangers, situated around the Forest to answer questions and generally converse with the visitors to educate them about the practices of the local landowners and the needs of the environment. However, this is a very resource intensive approach which is expensive and likely to only reach a select number of visitors. It was however thought that such methods could contribute to visitor experiences and thus, aid the long term development of a sustainable industry by ensuring visitor satisfaction. Indeed, this 'win-win' situation is one of the principle benefits of interpretation (Orams, 1995).

#### **8.3.4 A multi-sectoral approach**

Tourism is not an isolated industry. It is situated within a living environment amongst an organic and evolving culture and economy. Thus, tourism development needs to be sensitive and developed in a manner which does not threaten the survival of other industries and sectors in the same locality (Butler, 1999; Hunter, 1995; Stevens, 2002; Wall, 1997b). This multi-sectoral approach is adopted by both national parks and the recognition of other industries and broader, regional, national and international objectives are specifically articulated in the area's tourism strategies. This is particularly evidenced through the comprehensive integration of the tourism strategy objectives with the broader Management Plan priorities. Due to their nature, Management Plans do not give precedence to any one particular industry and thus, adopt neutrality when

considering which areas require development. The objectives contained within this document are therefore underpinned by the national park's overall remit rather than the specific requirements of any one industry. Thus, by ensuring that the objectives of the industry specific Tourism Strategy are aligned with those contained in the Management Plan, inevitably this gives some consideration to the requirements and presence of other relevant industries.

In addition, the partnerships and collaborative working also facilitate interactions between tourism businesses and other industries. For example, in the Yorkshire Dales, transport companies such as the Dales Bus service are a key partner of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. Whilst their provision of transport services is not specifically targeted at tourists, they feature in some marketing material and website media and are also included in the tourism strategy. The promotion of other industries can help to minimise the leakage from the local economy and thus, aid other communities within the national park who may not be directly affected by tourism. For example, in the New Forest, visitors are encouraged to use businesses that advertise the 'New Forest Marque', which shows their commitment to the use of local produce. Similarly, in the Yorkshire Dales, there are various initiatives to encourage visitors to 'buy local' and visit nearby alternative attractions. This has played a particularly significant part for businesses recovering from the Foot and Mouth crisis.

However, despite the encouragement of these complementary industries, tourism remains a dominant feature of the economies in both national parks. It is difficult to establish if it is being pursued to the detriment of other industries however, primarily due to the long term presence of tourism development in the respective regions. Although it was not specifically noted that the national parks are overly reliant on tourism, their financial contribution to the area and the employment opportunities they provide do imply that this may be the case. Indeed, specifically in the Yorkshire Dales, the losses experienced during the height of the Foot and Mouth crisis suggest that, if not now, certainly historically there has been an overreliance on the industry. To some extent however, this has been addressed by the increasing diversification amongst businesses in the area.

### **8.3.5 Developing a quality tourism experience**

Whilst many definitions of sustainable tourism development highlight the need for a balance between the economy, society and the environment, there is ultimately a fourth dimension which is equally important; the development of a long-term, viable tourism industry. It is taken for granted that destinations will inevitably experience tourism demand (Liu, 2003) and to a large extent, the general image and brand of national parks does create a constant flow of visitors (Mose & Wixlbaumer, 2007; Reinius & Fredman, 2007). However, the primary concern is not for the number of visitors but for the 'right type' of visitors. They need to be considerate of the natural environment and understand the impact that their actions have. To a large extent, such awareness can be created through the use of interpretation and visitor education as outlined in section 8.3.3 above. In enhancing the appreciation for the natural environment, interpretation can also directly heighten the visitor experience (Ballantyne et al, 2011). However, indirectly, it also leads to the preservation of cultural and natural sites and, as noted in other literature, tourists are ultimately more likely to have a more meaningful, positive experience in sites which are not culturally or physically exploited (Cater, 1991; Cronin, 1990; UNWTO, 2010).

It is not surprising then that some debate arose amongst respondents when considering the issue of honeypot sites. Particularly in relation to the New Forest, some of the larger villages which provide a significant proportion of visitor facilities suffer from significant concentrations of visitors in peak periods. Lyndhurst is a prime example of this. Such large numbers result in overcrowding, traffic congestion and in some instances, hostilities between the host community and visitors. As a result, ultimately, the visitor experience will be negatively affected. However, respondents were reluctant to suggest the increased dispersion of visitors. At present, their significant concentration in these smaller areas means that other, more isolated and tranquil parts of the national park retain their wilderness quality and remain unspoiled. Thus, the honeypot sites as something of a 'sacrifice' to protect the other, pristine areas of the park. In addition, the concentration of facilities in specific areas such as this, means that visitors know where they can find the amenities they need and planners and managers can use their resources more effectively in one area rather than spreading investment thinly across a variety of sites. The danger with honeypots however is two

fold. Firstly, the impact that such high visitor concentrations has on the local inhabitants and secondly, what if visitors only ever visit the honeypots and do not get out to other areas of the park? Given the significance of word of mouth advertising and the dominance of repeat visitors within tourist demographics, it is important that the honeypots are not communicated to be 'typical' examples of national park locations otherwise this could detract visitors and ultimately degrade the image of the broader tourism industry in the area.

In essence, as with other tourist destinations, visitors need to be provided with a high quality, value for money experience (Owen et al, 1992; UNWTO, 2010). The visitors interviewed as part of this study did not specifically state how they had experienced this, however, they did all highlight the significant role that the 'free' natural environment had played during their time in the national park. They all had engaged in outdoor activities and in both parks, the visitors had specifically taken advantage of the rights of access provided over the countryside. In the New Forest, this was predominantly over the Crown Lands in the open forestland whilst in the Yorkshire Dales, it mainly referred to extensive rights of way network granted over private land. Indeed, this accessibility is one of the central tenets of the UK national parks and the vast natural scenery provides a key attraction for many visitors. Given that access is provided free of charge over much of it, for a large proportion of visitors, the main costs incurred in visiting the areas are the travel to and from the national parks. Thus, in essence, the provision of this free access could arguably be seen to significantly contribute to 'a value for money' experience.

### **8.3.6 Integrated planning and management**

Chapter 4 highlighted the need for integrated planning and management strategies, which are linked by the on-going monitoring processes which feed back in a cyclical fashion. It was suggested that planning and management processes are inherently linked (Doswell, 1997; Kuo, 2002) and whilst the former outlines the overall goals, the latter determines the day to day activities required to achieve these. The primary evidence of integration of these processes within the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest was noted through the on-going monitoring processes undertaken. In both

areas, the day to day work of the rangers provides a form of impact assessment and can be used to quickly and efficiently identify problem areas requiring attention. However, this is very much reactionary management rather than proactive as the problems are only remedied *after* they occur.

The main source of proactive management is through the use of policy and strategy documents, which are formulated in conjunction with key stakeholders and ascertain specific actions required to meet a future vision for the area (Thomas et al, 2003). However, often such policies are informed by historical research findings and thus, the relevance of the objectives and key information contained therein is questionable. Indeed, this was found to be the case in both of the contexts assessed here. In the Yorkshire Dales, the tourism strategy largely referred to data from a 2008 survey whilst the New Forest was drawing on findings from a 2005 visitor survey. Indeed, this problem of collecting and communicating timely information is one of the key drawbacks of using surveys and other feedback data (Eagles et al, 2002; Jim, 1989). There is a clear need within both contexts for greater quality and more timely monitoring processes to be formulated and actioned. However, it was noted that in practice, this remains a significant challenge and some respondents commented that they could not see an immediate resolution for this. Indeed, even attempts at relatively 'simple' monitoring such as the number of visitors to the national park, are difficult due to the nature of the landscape and the national park system generally. The edges of the parks are not designated by boundary fences and a large number of people enter and leave the park on a daily basis who are not 'visitors'. Thus, unlike some foreign national parks which have clear entry fences and gates, it is not possible to use counters to determine visitor trends and patterns. Alternative methods such as surveys and website feedback are therefore sought however, these are often expensive and time consuming.

Some forms of impact assessment are however a statutory requirement and, alongside the day to day work of the rangers, the National Park Authorities engage in a programme of monitoring. This is particularly important given the cumulative impact that extended visitor use can have on the natural environment (Ceballos-Lascuirain, 1996; Farrell & Marion, 2002). For example, some visitor use can have relatively little or

no impact on the ecosystem however, extended use can lead to vegetation destruction, wildlife disturbance and more damaging environmental erosion. An example of this was illustrated in Figure 7.6 for the New Forest. This photograph showed the impacts of continuous trampling, which had resulted in a widened footpath and eroded vegetation. Whilst theory suggests that on-going monitoring should prevent such negative impacts, the presence of this degradation within these case studies implies that the monitoring processes currently utilised are ineffective. There is therefore a need going forward, to determine more appropriate and regular monitoring strategies and unsurprisingly, this objective features in the Tourism Strategies of both the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest.

#### **8.4 Analysing sustainable tourism development in national parks**

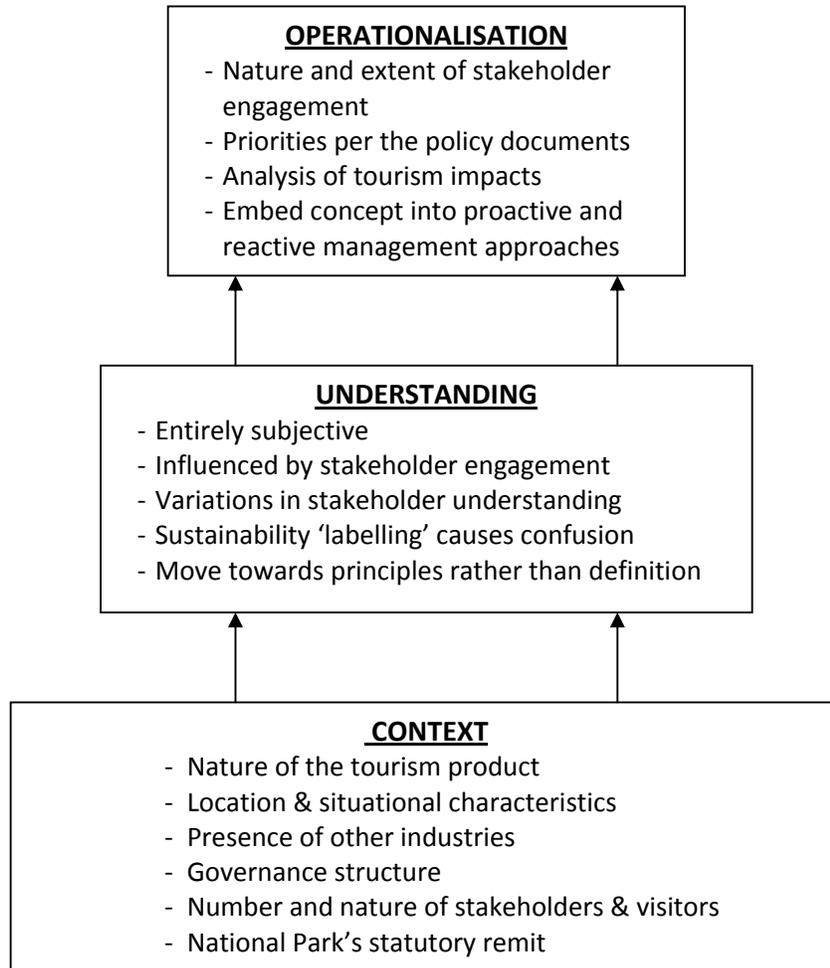
The preceding sections have analysed how the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest currently perceive and integrate sustainable tourism development into their planning and management strategies. Whilst there is some call to determine 'how far along the road' of sustainable tourism each destination is, in practice, this is somewhat impractical due to the ever-changing, organic environment which exists within the national parks. In addition, any direct comparison of approaches to sustainable tourism development must be reviewed with caution as ultimately, the processes which are deemed to be most appropriate will vary between destinations. Indeed, the contextual differences between national parks means that the way in which sustainable tourism development is defined and operationalised and indeed, even the *extent* to which it *needs* to be pursued varies between destinations. As a result, Manning (1999) states that sustainable tourism development should be examined on a case by case basis and this is the approach which has been adopted in this research.

However, as evidenced within the earlier sections of this chapter, it is possible to determine commonalities between the case study sites. As noted in Chapter 2, if the lessons learnt from successes in one destination can help managers elsewhere, this may ultimately result in a gradual shift towards more sustainable tourism at a broader, industry level. With this in mind, the findings from this research have been used to inform the development of two models which contribute to literature in this field. The

first model provides a theoretical framework to assist in the overall evaluation of sustainable tourism development in national parks. It outlines the key determinants and the intrinsic link between three core components: context, understanding and operationalisation. The second model meanwhile, is intended to assist at a more practical level and, whilst it is generic in nature, it provides a broad overview of the approach to understanding and operationalising the *principles* of sustainable tourism development in practice. This principles approach reflects the findings and analysis presented earlier in this chapter, which illustrated that some stakeholders struggled with terminology. It purposefully uses simplistic language and broad concepts so as to encourage greater participation and adoption amongst key stakeholder groups. The following sub-sections present and discuss these models in greater detail.

#### **8.4.1 A theoretical framework for analysis**

The primary aim of this research was to explore the meaning and practical application of sustainable tourism development principles in UK national parks. The research thus focused on three distinct areas: context, meaning and operationalisation. The research findings imply an implicit relationship between these three elements. Figure 8.1 presents this diagrammatically and in doing so, provides a theoretical framework within which sustainable tourism development can be analysed in national park settings. Specifically, it illustrates the key characteristics of each factor which are prevalent in the case studies included herein and are common amongst other broader academic literature. Whilst these factors are by no means exhaustive, the model contributes to existing theory in this field by providing a useful stance from which to commence broader evaluations of sustainable tourism development. Given the size and complexities of the discourses surrounding development theory, tourism theory and national park literature, this is a useful starting point for further analysis and can facilitate the evaluation of planning and management strategies.



**Figure 8.1: Evaluating sustainable tourism development in national parks**

The model suggests that in order to evaluate the progress towards the operationalisation of sustainable tourism development, it is first necessary to determine the understanding of the concept amongst stakeholders and in turn, the contextual characteristics which influence such meanings.

In essence, the contextual uniqueness of any destination will always have an impact on tourism planning and management. Throughout this research, six key areas of context have been identified as significant, and these are thus included in the model, namely: the tourism product; the location; other industries; the governance structure, the number and nature of stakeholders with a vested interest in the national park and the national park's statutory remit. These factors will impact the way in sustainable tourism

development is perceived and understood by key stakeholders. It is therefore imperative that the basis for any evaluation of sustainable tourism development begins by analysing the context in which it is situated.

The concept of sustainable tourism development is subjective and varies both between and within destinations. Theoretically, there have been difficulties noted in determining a universal definition of the term, particularly where stakeholders have disparate priorities. This stance held true in this study. However the findings also implied that the terminology surrounding 'sustainability' could often lead to confusion amongst stakeholders and thus suggested that the key focus should instead be on the development of common principles as opposed to the enforcement of a formal, universal definition. This allows greater flexibility in the way in which the term is defined, as it does not need to fit into a succinct, one or two line definition and nor does it need to adopt a 'one size fits all' mindset. Developing a common understanding was thought to require extensive stakeholder engagement, to ensure that all relevant parties had a voice and accepted and actively strove towards the park's overall objectives. Thus, when determining and analysing the understanding of the concept, it is important to ascertain the variations in stakeholder perceptions and determine levels of engagement that influence the more formal definitions included in policy and strategy documents.

The primary finding from this research was the need to embed sustainable tourism development principles into all planning and management processes. This can only be done once the context has been determined and the principles adequately defined. Yet, even having established these elements, there are no formal prescriptive guidelines for how this operationalisation should be done and indeed, even within the context of this research, variations could be observed, e.g. in the methods of stakeholder engagement or the types of interpretation techniques. However, some broader common elements were identified and thus, form key 'headings' under which operationalisation can be categorised. These include the nature and extent of stakeholder engagement, the priorities outlined in key formal documents, analysis of the direct impacts of tourism and the requirement for and way in which the principles are embedded into reactive and proactive management approaches. Some of these factors have been researched

extensively in academia in their own right and it would be inappropriate to dilute their significance here. However, the purpose of this research was to examine the *broader* picture and determine the overall approach to sustainable tourism development. Thus, in the context of this model, the identification of key characteristics is merely a means of highlighting the respective aspects which influence the perceptions and practical approaches to sustainable tourism development. They are however, by no means exhaustive and are merely intended to stimulate discussion and provide a framework for analysis. By outlining the main characteristics of context, understanding and operationalisation, this model contributes to existing theory by providing a foundation on which the analysis of sustainable tourism development can be based.

#### **8.4.2 Embedding the principles into planning & management processes**

The preceding section provided a model which could assist in the theoretical analysis of sustainable tourism development by drawing on the elements of context, understanding and practical application. Whilst this section has a similar focus, it moves away from theoretical stances, towards the formulation of a practical model which can be used by national park planners and managers to assist in their progress towards sustainable tourism development. Indeed, if true progress is to be made, literature needs to move beyond theory towards practical guidance. Figure 8.2 therefore contributes to existing literature by proposing a model which will assist park planners and managers in understanding and operationalising sustainable tourism development. The model highlights the linkages between context, understanding and practice. However, rather than focusing on complex terminology, it instead is based on the key principles of sustainable tourism development. Indeed, the findings from this study illustrated that some stakeholders encountered difficulties in using and understanding the terminology surrounding sustainable tourism development. This led to disengagement with the concept. The model presented at Figure 8.2 therefore offers a principles based approach so as to be more accessible to stakeholders. In addition rather than being overly prescriptive, it offers flexibility so that the model is accessible to an array of stakeholders within multiple national park destinations.

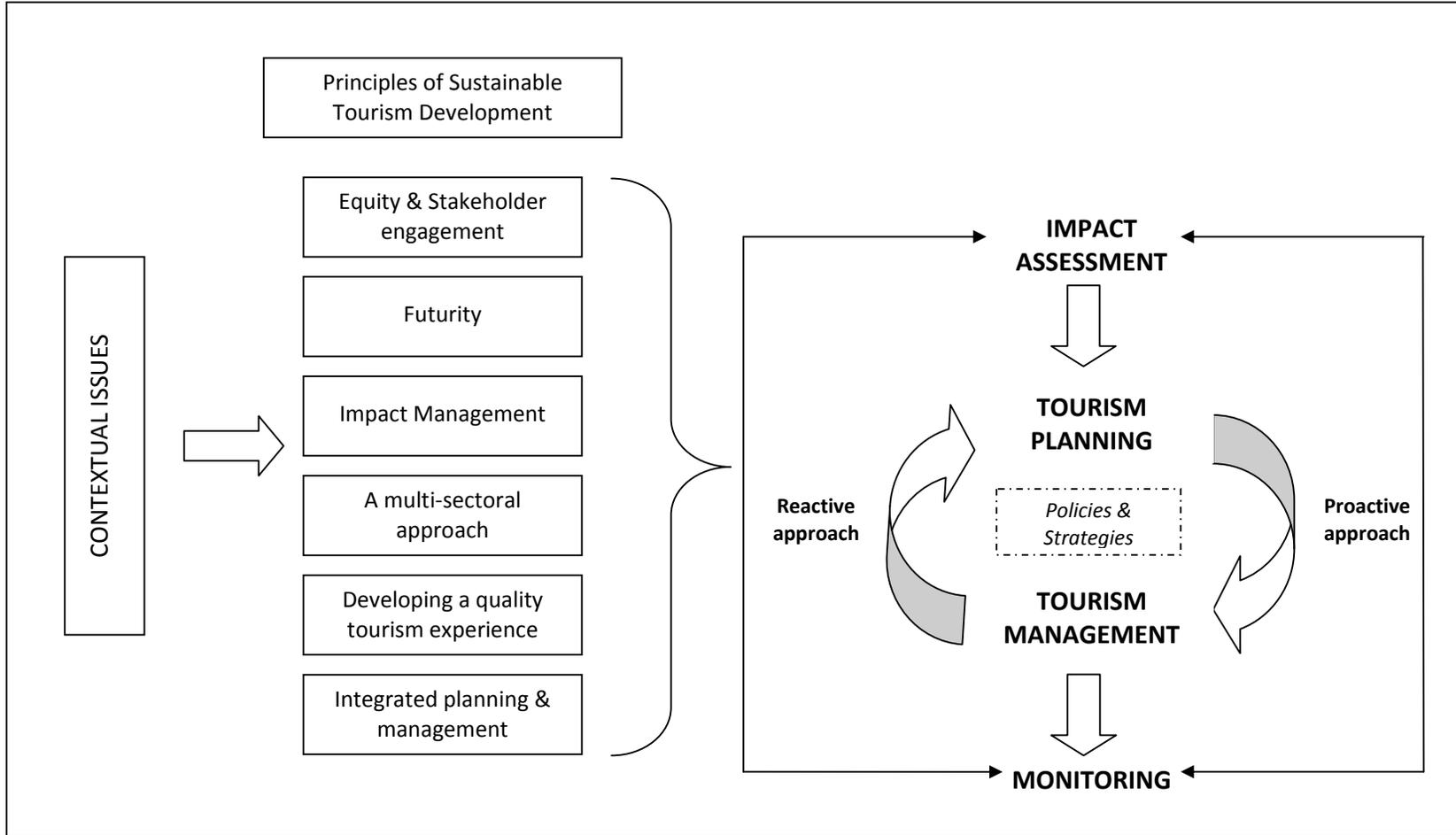


Figure 8.2: Embedding sustainable tourism development principles into national park planning and management.

The model in Figure 8.2 highlights the need to acknowledge contextually unique issues. These impact not only the way the principles are operationalised but ultimately, how they are understood. Six specific principles have been outlined in the model to provide some guidance to park planners and managers. These are the same six themes used earlier in this chapter to discuss and analyse the results of this study, having been largely derived from existing literature. Whilst it is anticipated that their respective importance within other national park areas is likely to vary, it is believed that they all will be present in some form or another.

The model presented at Figure 8.2 does not focus on the individual techniques and methods observed in the New Forest and Yorkshire Dales but instead, steps back to assess the 'bigger picture' and develop a general framework which can be universally applied. It is purposefully vague and does not outline *how* the principles should be interpreted and nor does it specify *how* they should be embedded as it is these elements of sustainable tourism development which are contextually significant. To explicitly state how these were done in the context of the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest would undermine the usefulness of applying the model in other contexts. As a consequence, Figure 8.2 is relatively simple and enables planners and managers to interpret the principles in a manner which is most appropriate to them.

However, regardless of how they are interpreted and operationalised, the principles need to be *embedded* into all elements of tourism planning and management, as represented by the right hand side of the model. This section of the model draws directly from Figure 4.1, as presented in the literature review. This illustrates that the findings of this study in this respect, are largely aligned with other studies in this area and respondents in the case studies recognised the need for an on-going reactive and proactive approach. Given the fast moving nature of national parks and the sensitivities of the natural environment, continuous monitoring is required to constantly feed back into planning and management approaches and ensure that opportunities are recognised and threats minimised in a timely fashion.

The usefulness of the model by practitioners is best illustrated by the use of an example, as illustrated here by drawing on data from the Yorkshire Dales:

- Contextual issues:

There are a substantial number of stakeholder groups, including the NPA, residents, tourism businesses, resident groups, charities, tourists and local Councils each with disparate priorities and objectives.

- Principle:

Equity & Stakeholder Engagement

- Planning & Management:

Stakeholders are actively encouraged to participate in planning processes to ensure their voice is heard. Stakeholder engagement methods include consultation, participation in partnership collaboration and volunteering, amongst others. As a result, they often have a direct impact on the ability to fulfil objectives and their input into tourism management and monitoring processes is key, whether directly (e.g. as a provider of tourism services) or indirectly (merely being polite and welcoming to visitors). In turn, stakeholders are often best placed to draw attention to new issues or highlight items which are specifically important to their individual stakeholder group. For example, environmental volunteers are most likely to first notice environmental degradation, which can then be prioritised in objectives to remedy and minimise on-going damage.

The proposed model is not without its limitations however. Indeed, one of the key criticisms lauded at the very concept of sustainable tourism development is its vagueness. This model is also somewhat ambiguous, providing only generic headings rather than a prescriptive means of developing an understanding and operationalisation of sustainable tourism development. This is purposeful however as the model is merely intended to provide a general framework which will assist planners and managers and enable the key elements to be flexibly applied in a variety of national park contexts.

In addition, a key challenge in relation to sustainable tourism development is the ever-changing macro and micro environments. National parks in particular are organic, living landscapes and thus are in a constant state of flux. As a consequence, the model is not

something which can be used once and set aside, but instead, needs to be revisited regularly as the context and priorities change. In addition, the principles may also be subject to change going forward and should by no means be seen as exhaustive. This is therefore the primary reason for the generic nature of the planning and management section of the model.

Both models presented in this chapter provide useful frameworks for assessing the meaning and assisting in the operationalisation of sustainable tourism development principles. The literature in this field is vast and can be overwhelming, especially given the complex terminology and ambiguity which pervades it. Thus, the models contribute to literature by providing simplistic frameworks which can be universally applied. These frameworks identify the key elements of sustainable tourism development which require consideration without overly prescribing one set approach. This means that they are accessible to an array of stakeholders in different destinations, which ultimately are likely to have their own unique issues and diverse priorities. Whilst they are by no means exhaustive, the models provide a useful starting point for practitioners and academics, when evaluating a destination's current position along the path to sustainable development, when determining the future plans for a destination and how this could be achieved.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

Both the Yorkshire Dales and New Forest have well established tourism industries, built on the foundations of sustainable tourism development. This chapter has analysed the manner in which they do this by examining the approach that each undertake when embedding the principles into their planning and management processes. However, despite widespread adoption of the principles of sustainable tourism development, there remained some disparity in the literal interpretations of the concept offered by stakeholders. The majority of the issues however seemed to stem from the 'labelling' of the concept, with consumers of tourism particularly thwarted to the terminology of sustainability. When discussions moved away from definition, towards a greater focus on principles, the notions underpinning the concept were largely reflected, with characteristics such as multidimensionality, 'balance' and a forward looking approach

all specifically noted. This adds some credence to the arguments in existing studies that the term is a 'buzzword' (Lélé, 1991). However, other comments that it is little more than a 'marketing gimmick' or an 'empty rhetoric' were put asunder by the stakeholder discussions which clearly articulated the principles of sustainable tourism development, even if they did not specifically link it to the terminology itself.

In general, it was widely accepted in both destinations that the concept should not be perceived to be an end goal, but rather be viewed as a 'framework' on which planning and management processes can be hung to move the industry towards a better place. In essence, the principles of sustainable tourism development therefore need to be embedded into the very foundations of the tourism industry. Thus, the ultimate inability to 'achieve' it is inconsequential. One specific respondent in the New Forest noted that the adoption of sustainable tourism principles has 'nothing to do with whether or not it is achievable' but instead, represents the acknowledgment of a need for greater balance between the competing forces of the destination. Thus, its lack of achievability does not make the concept redundant as it ultimately reflects an on-going process that may assist the guidance of more appropriate and sensitive development.

Indeed, in the context of these national parks, the principles of sustainable tourism development can be seen embedded into various planning and management processes. Despite acknowledging the contextual differences between the two national parks used in this study, to a large extent, there were significant similarities in the approaches undertaken within the Yorkshire Dales and New Forest. It was therefore possible to examine both national parks in unison to determine how each approaches the operationalisation of sustainable tourism development. This discussion was framed around the six key principles of sustainable tourism development, determined from existing literature, namely: futurity, equity & stakeholder engagement, impact management, a quality tourism experience, a multi-sectoral stance and developing an integrated approach.

Whilst this research was specifically focused on the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest, the results identified a general approach to sustainable tourism development which could be adapted and applied in various national park contexts. Indeed, there is no one

method which is specifically advocated above others, due to the significance of contextual characteristics. No two destinations are the same and nor are they static systems, due to their ever-changing micro and macro environment. However, there are some broad level commonalities which can be identified and understanding and acknowledging these can assist in the theoretical approaches to sustainable tourism development and practical challenges of operationalising the concept.

With this in mind, this chapter has presented two models. The first, presented in Figure 8.1, provides a theoretical framework which can be used to assist in the evaluation of how sustainable tourism development is understood and operationalised. Given the vastness and complexities of the literature bases underpinning this research, the model succinctly identifies the elements of each rhetoric which were deemed to be of key significance. It thus, presents a framework which contributes to existing theory by providing a foundation on which the analysis of sustainable tourism development can be based and thus, is intended to assist the future evaluation of sustainable tourism development at specific case study sites going forward.

In addition, a second model was proposed which is intended to assist planners and managers at a *practical* level. This model provides a broad overview of the fundamental elements required to operationalise sustainable tourism development, identifying the key principles of the term and highlighting the importance of embedding these in all elements of national park planning and management. Literature in this field suggests that there is a lack of movement from theory to practice. This model addresses this gap by identifying six broad headings which encapsulate the principles of sustainable tourism development and illustrates the importance of embedding these into planning and management processes. However, the manner in which the principles should be understood and operationalised will vary according to contextual characteristics and consequently, the model avoids being overly prescriptive to ensure it is accessible to a variety of stakeholders in multiple destinations. The usefulness of the model is perceived to lie in this generic nature. Indeed, given that the successes at one destination may be able to inform processes at others, it is thought that this framework could be a useful tool to aid the operationalisation of sustainable tourism development at a localised scale.

## **Chapter 9**

### **CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

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#### **9.1 Introduction**

The chapter concludes the research by summarising the major findings as expressed in the preceding results and discussion chapters. It also refers back to the key elements of existing literature in this domain and highlights the contributions made in the present study. Specifically, it also highlights the role that the theoretical and practical models of sustainable tourism development which were presented in Chapter 8 could have for other, similar contexts. Throughout this summary, reference is made to the key elements of this research, namely: context, meaning and practice. Section 9.3 then moves on to articulate where and how the objectives of this research have been met. These objectives were outlined in Chapter 1 of this thesis and their evaluation here is a means of establishing the relative success of this research as a whole. However, despite the research meeting all of its goals, the findings are not without their limitations and thus, when appraising the findings contained herein, it is important that these limitations are given due and adequate consideration. In the main, they are methodological and, as such, were evaluated within Chapter 5 as part of the overall analysis of the research strategy and methodological approach. Whilst these were mitigated as far as possible within the practical data collection, it was not possible to completely eradicate them and thus, a summary of the key limitations is provided in section 9.4. Going forward, potential avenues for future research have been identified which could address some of them. Section 9.5 therefore identifies areas of potential future research, some of which might also provide a wider scope for testing the proposed models of sustainable tourism development in different national park environments.

#### **9.2 Contributions to knowledge**

This research has examined the notion of sustainable tourism development within two UK national park contexts: the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest. These case studies

offer very different contexts, in terms of the age of the national park, spatiality, size, population density, governance structure, land ownership and stakeholder groups. In relation to this latter point, there were some relatively surprising findings. The Yorkshire Dales is largely made up of individual landowners whilst almost 50% of the New Forest owned by the Crown. Potentially therefore, it might be expected that there would be fewer stakeholders overall, although the Crown would represent one of the major, more powerful parties in the national park system. Yet, in reality, this does not appear to be the case as both national parks contexts displayed significant numbers of stakeholder groups with a vested interest in park planning and management.

Although lead agencies and authorities could be identified within each national park, these were largely for administrative purposes only, as the action 'on the ground' ultimately required the co-operation and interactions of multiple landowners and stakeholder groups. It was not possible to identify the actual number and nature of all stakeholder groups due to the vastness of the areas. However, from the fieldwork undertaken, it was determined that although there were similarities in numbers of stakeholders, the differences appeared to lie in the nature and spatiality of these groups. For example, whilst there are a significant number of landowners in the Yorkshire Dales, over 50% of the New Forest is Crown owned and managed land. Similarly, in the Yorkshire Dales, the settlements are small and spread over a wide spatial area whilst in the New Forest, there are larger towns and the population is a lot denser. This finding implies that there is no immediate correlation between the number of stakeholders with an interest in tourism planning and management and the respective size of the national park. It should be noted however that only a small proportion of stakeholders directly engaged with this research, thus, further research would be required to delve into the respective levels of engagement amongst different types of stakeholders.

Both the Yorkshire Dales and New Forest have well established tourism industries, which form central elements of their broader economies. To some extent this is to be expected given that one of the statutory remits of UK national parks is to provide recreational access for members of the public (MacEwen & MacEwen, 1987; Sharpley, 2009b). Indeed, with changes in the macro environment, it is anticipated that visitor

numbers will continue to grow as areas become increasingly accessible. Alongside changes in tourism demand, aging demographics, increased car ownership and technological advancements are also contributing to growing tourism numbers (Eagles & McCool, 2009; Eagles et al, 2002; Hall & Lew, 2009; IUCN, 2002). These trends can be observed in both of these case studies, where the majority of visitors generally travel to the national park via car and are primarily aged 45 years and older.

The impacts associated with tourism were also relatively similar between the two national parks. As seen within broader academic research, the main benefits were largely associated with the economy whilst the drawbacks related to social and environmental issues (Brown, 1998; Hall & Lew, 2009). Although more noticeable within the Yorkshire Dales, respondents from both contexts tended to focus more on the negative issues, with only fleeting comments made in relation to the positive aspects of the industry. However, such benefits as income contribution and employment opportunities were often indirectly asserted within key policy documents and only alluded to within other comments by respondents. The primary impacts noted largely related to erosion, wildlife disturbance, overcrowding and congestion. Whilst tourism development is encouraged to aid the economy and stimulate growth, the accompaniment of these detrimental social and environmental impacts is somewhat counterproductive. Tourism development is thus, something of double edged sword. Indeed, given the centrality of the natural environment to the tourism product on offer in national parks, the continuing presence of these negative impacts supports existing literature and adds weight to the perception that tourism 'carries the seeds of its own destruction'(Mason, 2003; McCool & Moisey, 2008).

The response within literature to this 'development-dilemma' has been the proposal of sustainable tourism development; a concept which adopts the principles of sustainable development into the specifics of the tourism industry (Sharpley, 2009a). Largely, this involves adopting a holistic approach, acknowledging the importance of futurity and the achievement of a balance between social, economic and environmental priorities (Liu, 2003; Müller, 1994; Owen et al, 1993). The concept was rapidly and widely adopted by destination planners and managers. However, in their haste, no consensus was achieved in relation to definition or key principles (Garrod & Fyall, 1998; Sharpley,

2009a; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). In some respects, this is a strength as it enables the concept to be flexed around the contextual uniqueness of different destinations. However, within destinations, the lack of a universal understanding can result in confusion and lead to different stakeholders prioritising their own needs above those of the broader national park. Indeed, this was seen within both of these case studies to some extent. However, more notable amongst the interview respondents was the confusion surrounding the terminology, rather than the concept's broader principles. Indeed, when engaged in discussions more generally, respondents were largely able to articulate the broader principles which underpinned the concept. However, it was when the 'label' of sustainability was used that confusion arose and stakeholders appeared to disengage. This issue with terminology is one of the key findings from this study. Butler (1993) highlighted variations in the naming of the concept and other academics suggested that there was a need to move away from definition and labelling in order to progress debate (Liu, 2003). Indeed, the findings here suggest that exact definition and the labelling of the concept is of little importance, particularly if such labelling leads to confusion and deters stakeholders from engaging with practical application. Instead, the focus should be on developing a common set of acceptable goals which enable the destination to progress towards achieving the concept's broader principles.

Both the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest experienced difficulty with the sustainability 'label' however, their respective uses of the terminology in official documentation somewhat differed. Whilst the Yorkshire Dales incorporated the concept heavily into policy documents, the New Forest Tourism Strategy did not use the phrase at all and indeed, the lead authority for tourism, the New Forest District Council, were actively pursuing alternative phrases within marketing material, including 'wise', 'responsible' and 'green'. Yet, whilst the terminology is changing, the basic principles and the understanding behind the phrases are remaining relatively static. These new terms are thus, not in fact new but merely simpler and are intended to reduce confusion and thus encourage greater engagement. The New Forest's approach therefore appears to be a means of reducing jargon and simplifying terminology to make the concept more accessible to a broader range of stakeholders.

However, *understanding* the concept and its underlying principles is just one dimension of the issue. A far greater challenge is in the broader operationalisation of the concept. Indeed, Bushell (2003) suggested that the negative impacts of tourism are not related to tourism volumes *per se*, but rather inadequate planning and management systems. Thus, whilst it is proposed that sustainable tourism development may be a panacea for the ills of the industry, as shown in this research, these will only be effective if they are *embedded* into the foundations of the planning and management processes. Herein lies the central thesis for this research.

Despite the physical and theoretical variations observed between the national park contexts, their approaches to operationalising sustainable tourism development had a number of similarities and this enabled the main proportion of the analysis contained within Chapter 8 to be done with the findings of both contexts in mind. Based on the broader principles of sustainable tourism development derived from existing studies, six key themes were deduced, namely: 1. Equity & stakeholder engagement; 2. Futurity; 3. Impact management; 4. A multi-sectoral approach; 5. Developing a quality tourism experience and; 6. Integrated Planning and Management. Whilst the examples of how each context strived to achieve these in practice, the discussions surrounding their broader approaches were presented in Chapter 8, under these six headings. This is better explained with the use of an example. In relation to stakeholder engagement, descriptions of individual engagement techniques were provided in the respective findings for each location within Chapters 6 and 7, e.g. the use of partnership working, network development, feedback processes and consultation. However, Chapter 8, drew on the general overall approach, specifically noting how the contexts communicate this and the relative importance stakeholders attach to the technique.

Both national parks showed evidence of incorporating all of the main dimensions of sustainable tourism development into their planning and management strategies although, how and the extent to which this was done did vary somewhat. Such variations were largely due to the contextual characteristics of the national park. Using the earlier example of stakeholder engagement, the methods available for use are largely dependent on the number and locality of stakeholders and thus, inevitably, the approaches for the two parks were different. With the New Forest being more densely

populated and containing specific honeypot towns, they are more easily able to arrange and benefit from sectoral networking opportunities, particularly in and around key towns and villages. Indeed, the importance of context is heavily articulated within existing academic tourism research. Concepts and operational methods need to be flexed and adapted to suit the needs of the individual destinations according to what is appropriate and acceptable to the different stakeholder groups. Indeed, whilst theoretically a 'balance' between the three dimensions of sustainable development is sought, in actuality, they are not equal components. Thus, trade-offs are often required to determine which elements should be prioritised above others (Adams, 2006; Barbier, 1987). This therefore requires comprehensive and on-going environmental scanning to determine what the key issues are and ensure procedures are designed which adequately address them.

With this in mind, recommendations have not been made here for specific improvements to the approaches adopted within the New Forest and Yorkshire Dales. As with other national parks, they both constantly face fresh challenges and thus, their priorities and needs evolve to ensure that the negative impacts are mitigated and opportunities are maximised wherever possible. Thus, determining specific needs at one point in time will be of minimal use going forward as they are subject to change within a short period. It was therefore deemed more appropriate and useful to step back from the specifics, adopt a comprehensive stance and identify the core elements of the broader approaches to planning and management. Drawing on the similarities of the two case studies examined herein, the research culminated by presenting two models: the first of which presented a framework to assist in the evaluation of sustainable tourism and the second, which presented more practical guidance for understanding and embedding the principles of sustainable tourism development into planning and management processes.

Whilst the intended use and audience for the models varies, they are similar in that they both highlight the importance and inter-relationship between the three central elements of this research: context, understanding and practical application. Whilst expressed slightly differently in the models, essentially, the core components of both can be summarised as follows:

- Contextual characteristics are of fundamental importance to planning and management processes as no two areas are the same due to their different locations, stakeholders, tourism products, other industries and governance structure. Before attempting to develop a common understanding of sustainable tourism development or how this can be achieved, it is first important to assess the contextual sensitivities of the area to develop common objectives and determine an appropriate tourism strategy.
- The findings from this research implied that some stakeholders disengaged with the term due to the complexities of the terminology associated with sustainable tourism development. Thus, rather than developing a set definition of sustainable tourism development, a broader, more flexible approach is required to enhance the understanding of the concept by promoting key principles. From a practical perspective, these can be summarised under six key headings, namely: equity & stakeholder engagement, futurity, impact management, a multi-sectoral approach, developing a quality tourism experience and integrated planning & management.
- The principles of sustainable tourism development need to be embedded into all elements of planning and management processes. How this is done at a practical level will vary between destinations, depending on what is appropriate for the specific context. This embeddedness is particularly important in relation to stakeholder engagement. For the most part, tourism planning is co-ordinated and devised by authorities and partners with minimal jurisdiction for the practical application of management techniques. Within the case studies here for example, the National Park Authorities are responsible for publishing the areas' tourism strategies, which outline a number of desired actions and policies. However, the practical achievement of these is reliant on the landowners and managers themselves as the Authorities do not physically or legally own the land. Thus, it is imperative that stakeholders are involved in all elements of planning and management to ensure that the actions outlined are realistic, that they are generally acceptable and that the stakeholders take responsibility for their role in the achievement of them. The model therefore

highlights the need for stakeholder engagement within all of the key planning and management processes.

- Destinations are not static due to the continuous changes in the micro and macro environments. Thus, to ensure that negative impacts are minimised and opportunities exploited wherever possible, the planning and management processes need to be integrated and on-going. In essence, within the models, the environmental scanning, planning, management and monitoring processes are perceived to be an on-going cycle that should feed into each other through a combination of proactive and reactive approaches.

It is thought that the models may be useful tools to facilitate the evaluation of sustainable tourism development and assist destination managers within other national parks. Specifically, one criticism of research in this field is the lack of practical guidance for destination managers and the second model presented in Chapter 8, addresses this issue by providing a generic overview of the approach required to progress destinations towards sustainable tourism development. The model identifies six key principles of sustainable tourism development yet is purposely not overly prescriptive. Thus, the model can be applied at a variety of destinations and adapted to suit the unique requirements of each individual context.

Both models presented are not finite and nor are they intended to be used on a 'one-off' basis. Due to the constantly changing macro and micro environment within national parks, it is essential that they are revisited regularly as the context, objectives and priorities of the area and its stakeholders' changes. Indeed, sustainable tourism development is not an 'end goal' but an on-going process. The respondents in this research were all unified in their beliefs that it is not an achievable end state. Some suggested there was a need to determine 'how far along the road' they are however, there is limited use in comparing and contrasting the relative position of destinations along any such scale due to their contextual differences. Sustainable tourism development is not a competition. As Hunter (1997) suggests, it is a process which *all* tourism enterprises should strive for, regardless of their scale and the nature of their business. Whilst there is always more than can be done, any small changes towards more sustainable practices represent micro shifts to what is essentially a macro issue.

Indeed, although such small scale successes have previously received criticism (Wheeller, 1992), it is only through gradual changes that a mass shift in broader industry will be achieved. Thus, as stated by one respondent in this study, the fact it is not 'achievable' is irrelevant as ultimately, at least in trying to achieve it, the industry should end up in a better place than if nothing had been done at all.

### **9.3 Revisiting the research objectives**

The preceding section outlined the major findings from this study and highlighted the key contributions to existing literature, which primarily consists of the proposal of two models of sustainable tourism development within planning and management in UK national parks. Largely, these illustrated the achievement of the overall aim of the research, which was to explore the meaning and practical application of sustainable tourism development within specific UK national park contexts. However, to further elucidate this, consideration is now given to the specific research objectives which underpin this broader aim and which were outlined in Chapter 1. This section revisits these objectives sequentially and outlines how these have been addressed throughout the course of this study.

**Objective 1:** *To determine how the concept of sustainable tourism development is perceived and understood by key tourism stakeholders.*

The historical academic development of the concept of sustainable tourism development was considered within Chapter 2. The concept has heavy roots in development theory and specifically, its parental paradigm of sustainable development. Thus, to develop a comprehensive understanding of the concept, these frameworks were also given due consideration. The literature suggested that there was significant debate surrounding the concept in practice due to a lack of definition and universal principles and indeed, this was found to be the case in this study. The primary means of assessing personal stakeholder perceptions were through discussions during key respondent interviews, whilst 'official' definitions were evaluated in light of the analysis of printed materials, e.g. websites and marketing material. In relation to the latter, despite its widespread use, there was a distinct lack of published definitions although

many of the principles were communicated via other means. The meaning and interpretations of the concept were presented within the respective findings in Chapters 6 and 7 whilst Chapter 8 analysed these in light of existing literature. Whilst largely, there was a broad universal understanding of the principles underlying the key concepts, the findings suggested that the labelling of concepts often created a somewhat, unnecessary difficulty amongst stakeholders. Thus, particularly in the New Forest, there has been some movement away from the term 'sustainability', with more simplistic language used in its place. In practice, this does not appear to detract from the concept but merely makes it more accessible to a broader range of stakeholders and enables greater levels of engagement. Thus, the research findings highlight the importance of developing a common understanding of the principles of the concept, rather than prescribing set terminology and definitive definitions.

**Objective 2:** *To examine the role of different stakeholders and their respective levels of inclusion in the planning and management of tourism development.*

An initial stakeholder analysis was conducted during the design of the research strategy and is presented in Chapter 5. This was revisited during the course of the data collection and additional details of the respective roles of stakeholders were gleaned. However, the analysis is not without its limitations and indeed, due to the vast nature of the national park environments, it was incredibly difficult to determine smaller and perhaps arguably less influential stakeholder groups. However, through the use of extensive document searches, observations and interviews, it is thought that the major categories of stakeholders have been identified. In addition, the engagement techniques and the respective views of stakeholders in relation to inclusion have been presented within the findings chapters, with subsequent evaluation on equality issues being analysed in Chapter 8. Whilst both national parks had a considerable number of stakeholders with a vested interest in park planning and management, there was no significant correlation between national park size and the number of stakeholders engaged in planning and management processes. Instead, it appeared that the nature of the stakeholder groups, their location within the national park and, where applicable, the length of their residency, all influenced levels of engagement. Although

further research into these factors would be required to draw more detailed conclusions in this respect, the findings from this research showed that stakeholders in both locations were more likely to engage where they would be directly affected by the impacts of tourism development.

**Objective 3:** *To identify how stakeholders view the structure and governance of national parks and its suitability as a context for developing sustainable tourism development.*

The respective governance structure of each national park has been determined through the examination of key documents, web sources and interviews. Respondents were explicitly asked to comment on the relative usefulness of the structure and whilst some perceived it to be restrictive, many thought that it provided a useful construct within which to pursue sustainable tourism development. These comments are given due consideration within the respective findings in Chapters 6 and 7. Largely, the dual remits of UK national parks were thought to be compatible with the broader principles of sustainable tourism development, given that both have a tri-dimensional structure that require a respective 'balance' to be sought. As a consequence, it is suggested that, to some extent, all tourism needs to recognise and incorporate the principles of sustainable tourism development into its remit if it is to contribute to the national park's broader objectives.

**Objective 4:** *To examine the environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts of tourism within the national parks from various stakeholders' perspectives.*

The impacts of tourism presented in existing literature have been reviewed in Chapter 4. This analysis presents general impacts and notes common issues affecting national parks. To a large extent, many of these were also present in various forms within the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest. Prime examples include erosion, vegetation destruction and wildlife disturbance. The specific impacts of tourism in the two case

sites were analysed via observations, interviews and official documentation (e.g. Strategies and Policies). The personal observations also enabled photographs to be taken, clearly showing evidence of some of the impacts and thus strengthening the case study findings. The use of multiple data collection methods enabled the identification of context specific issues and also allowed the perspectives of different stakeholder groups to be gleaned. Largely, these impacts are presented in Chapter 6 and 7 however, their usefulness in highlighting contextual issues is also referred to in the analysis in Chapter 8.

**Objective 5:** *To identify the extent to which national parks currently 'embed' sustainable tourism development principles into their planning and management practices.*

The overall consideration of the approaches to planning and management within each of the national parks was analysed in Chapter 8. The discussions here draw on the need for integrated planning and management strategies as outlined in Chapter 4. Key themes were identified within the principles of sustainable tourism development and these provided a framework for the analysis of the approach to tourism planning and management within each of the case sites. The discussion then culminated in the proposal of two models, both of which revolve around and illustrate the implicit relationship between the three key components of this research: context, meaning and practical application. The first model summarises the main aspects of each component and in doing so, provides a theoretical framework to facilitate the evaluation of sustainable tourism development. The second model provides practical guidance on the fundamental considerations required to understand and embed sustainable tourism development *principles* into the national park planning and management and move destinations along the road to sustainable development. Both models are purposefully vague to enable appropriate contextual interpretations and as such, are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. They do however, at the very least, provide a starting point for future discussions and evaluations and thus, provide a key means of delving into the complexities of the discourses which underpin this research, namely development theory, tourism theory and national park literature.

**Objective 6:** *To explore the significance of context in determining planning and management strategies, by assessing the similarities and differences between two UK national park models: the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest.*

The contextual considerations of each national park are provided within the findings chapters and specifically, by outlining the park profiles of each site in Chapters 6 and 7. This largely identifies the differences between the two parks, in terms of the age of the national park, spatiality, size, population density, governance structure, land ownership and stakeholder groups. Although the similarities and differences can be seen within the findings chapters, they begin to be specifically alluded to within Chapter 7 and are further highlighted within the analysis in Chapter 8. Indeed, the prime differences are in the individual methods of operationalisation, whilst significant similarities are present in the overall approaches. It is these similarities that enabled the development of the theoretical and practical frameworks for sustainable tourism development in national parks, as presented in Chapter 8.

#### **9.4 Limitations of the study**

The limitations of the study have been acknowledged throughout the course of the research. Largely, these relate to issues of methodology and were the result of time and resource constraints. Although attempts were made to mitigate these as far as possible, ultimately, their presence inevitably affects the reliability and rigour of the findings presented within this research. A summary of the main limitations is therefore presented below, to enable the main conclusions presented in this chapter to be appraised in an appropriate light.

One of the most significant limitations is in relation to the case study methodology. Although case studies benefit from methodological triangulation through the use of multiple and often complementary sources of data, their lack of “hard and fast rules” means that the manner in which they are undertaken can vary between contexts (Gerring, 2004). This is particularly poignant in multiple case studies, such as this one. Whilst this issue can be mitigated to some extent by using the same researcher in both contexts, exact replication of the same study in two destinations is impossible due to

the differences inherent in the two contexts. For example, the number and relative significance of stakeholder groups varied within each national park. Whilst such contextual differences formed part of the central focus on this research, from a methodological stance, it meant there was some inconsistency between the way in which the data was collected between the sites and this could be deemed to weaken the findings and analysis.

In addition, given the importance of building a multi-dimensional study, the focus within this research was on generating sufficient breadth of findings as opposed to depth of findings. As a consequence, only a limited number of each data type was collected for analysis, e.g. only the primary policy documents were selected for analysis, a limited number of interviews were conducted and only short observational visits were conducted. The most notable limitation in relation to this was within the interview data. Whilst it would have been advantageous to conduct a number of interviews with respondents from each stakeholder group, due to time and resource constraints, this was not possible. It was therefore decided that a number of different stakeholder groups would be targeted in an attempt to get a range of stakeholders, rather than saturate one specific stakeholder group. However, the drawback of this is undoubtedly that the respondents interviewed may not be representative of that specific group. Indeed, the sampling method for identifying interview respondents was very much purposive and this in itself may lead to bias within the findings. It is therefore acknowledged throughout that the findings are very subjective and no generalisations of results have been made across the broader stakeholder groups.

The analysis of the data from case studies is also often subject to a number of criticisms, principal amongst these being the tendency to display a "bias towards verification...to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions" (Flyvberg, 2011: p.309). In an attempt to counteract this, the design of the data collection was purposefully vague and the interview schedules in particular, were designed to avoid leading questions. As suggested by Robson (2011), the interviews were conducted in locations which were determined by the respondent and where, as far as possible, they were able to speak freely and could not be influenced by external factors. However, whilst such measures can be taken to minimise the bias in the data, in essence, due to the

subjective nature of qualitative research, the researcher's attitude and beliefs will always have some impact on data analysis; whether this is the actual interpretation of the results or even the extracts which were deemed to be important. In an attempt to overcome this, appropriate themes were selected based on the literature review and these were then used to inform the qualitative coding. However, this does not dispel the issues of bias completely and thus, the results need to be appraised in light of such limitations.

### **9.5 Potential areas for future research**

There is significant scope for further avenues of research leading on from this study. To address one of the major limitations outlined above, it would be useful to expand the case studies contained herein. Given the vastness of the contexts of the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest, the data collected here represents only the 'tip of the iceberg'. The data collection could therefore benefit from being broadened and deepened to include a greater selection of stakeholders, documentary sources and even an extended observation stay at each site. Specifically however, to address the concerns regarding depth of interview data, it would be useful to extend the sample of interview respondents from different stakeholder groups to ascertain any variations in responses and explore the reasons for these. Specifically, this research did not explore the detailed background of stakeholder respondents, primarily due to the limited number who were involved in the study. However, if the respondent numbers were to increase, it may be useful to explore the influence and variation of stakeholder demographics, for example, it might be possible to explore how responses vary amongst those situated in different areas of the park or amongst those who have been involved in the national park and tourism for different lengths of time.

In addition, the nature of a case study methodology is very much situational and thus, examines the area at a relatively static point in time. However, given that both the Yorkshire Dales and New Forest stakeholders accepted that sustainable tourism development is an evolving *process* rather than an end goal, it would also be interesting to conduct a follow up study at each site to assess the extent to which progress is made against specific objectives. Thus, theoretically, replicating the study in, for example, 5

years time, when new Management Plans have been drafted in each area and the objectives of the Tourism Strategies have been reviewed and revised, it may be possible to better evaluate the position of the national parks and determine how effective the planning and management processes have been in striving for sustainable tourism development goals. For example, if the same goals continue to be present, this may indicate that the past efforts were ineffective as little or no progress has been made. Alternatively, if past issues and challenges are no longer included, this may suggest that efforts have been successful and thus, they are no longer considered to be a significant threat to the area's society, economy or environment.

Moving away from the contexts of the Yorkshire Dales and the New Forest, future research in other UK national parks could provide a wider scope for the testing and further development of the models of sustainable tourism development presented in Chapter 8. Whilst the models are purposefully vague in order to respect the need for contextual considerations, applying them in a greater number of destinations may enable greater detail to be added which could assist planners and managers in other areas. For example, at present, the practical model notes the requirement for stakeholder engagement to underpin planning and management, however, no further details are provided about how this could be done. If however, specific techniques were identified as being common amongst a number of UK national parks, the model could be extended to incorporate these. This could be particularly beneficial for planners and managers of new areas in the UK. As an alternative, the models could also be tested within national parks in foreign countries, to assess if the bases of planning and management remain the same in significantly different contexts.

## **9.6 Conclusion**

This chapter draws the thesis to a close. It provides a summary of the key findings from the research and notes these in relation to existing academic literature. Primarily, the findings reiterate the need for contextual considerations and specifically identify the importance of on-going integrated planning and management processes. Whilst it is acknowledged that the principles of sustainable tourism development provide the basis of an appropriate and generally supported process to achieve this, there is some

confusion surrounding terminology and subsequent application that can lead to stakeholders becoming disengaged with the concept. However, the response to this and subsequent manner in which conceptual interpretations are developed amongst stakeholders were seen to vary between the two contexts. The New Forest saw some movement away from the 'sustainability label' and simpler terms are increasingly used which are perceived to have similar, if not identical meanings. The Yorkshire Dales however, embedded the notion into the Tourism Strategy, providing a distinct definition and principles of the concept and weaving the term into its policies and action plan.

Indeed, this issue of context is fundamental to the very notion of sustainable tourism development. Ultimately, every destination faces its own unique challenges and triumphs and thus, the planning and management strategies for one are not necessarily compatible with others. However, similar notions that underpin the overall approaches to planning and management can be observed and largely, these align with the principles of sustainable tourism development. For example, an integrated approach, futurity and balance between objectives. Thus, the culmination of this research has been to develop two models which highlight the relationship between context, meaning and practice; one of which provides a theoretical framework intended to facilitate evaluation of sustainable tourism development whilst the other is intended to aid destination planners and managers in striving to embed sustainable tourism development into its broader planning and management processes. Whilst neither are intended to be prescriptive nor exhaustive, as a minimum, they provide a framework which may be used as a starting point for planners and managers in other, similar national park destinations.

Alongside a review of the key findings, this chapter also specifically outlined how the objectives of the research, as outlined in Chapter 1, have been met. Largely, this was achieved within the results and analysis chapters although reference is also made to the earlier literature review. Yet, despite the research realising its objectives, the findings are neither definitive nor exhaustive due to the limitations inherent in the study. Many of the main issues relate to methodological choices and constraints and thus, whilst they were mitigated as far as possible, some were insurmountable. As a

consequence, they need to be given due consideration when appraising the results of the research as ultimately, they impact the overall rigour and reliability of the findings. The limitations have largely been noted throughout the course of this research however, they are reiterated in this chapter to facilitate the evaluation of the findings. The suggestions for further avenues of study are largely geared towards addressing these limitations and include the recommendation of enhancing the existing case study through a broadened data set, replicating the existing study at a future date to evaluate progress and testing the models of sustainable tourism development presented in this study by applying them in alternative national park contexts.

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## APPENDIX A

### ***EXAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL***

---

**Date of Interview:** .....

**National Park:** Yorkshire Dales/New Forest

**Stakeholder Type:** .....

**Resident location:** .....

**Reference No:** .....

#### **Introduction**

- Explain nature of the research & respondent's role in it
- Explain confidentiality of interview responses – coding of data, anonymity
- Request permission for recording
- Respondent to sign ethics form

#### **Part 1: Key Concepts**

1. How do you define the phrases 'sustainable tourism' and 'sustainability'?
2. Do you think there is an overriding definition used amongst stakeholders? If not, is this problematic?
3. Do you think that it is achievable in practice?
4. How important do you think sustainable tourism is for the national park? Why?

#### **Part 2: National Park & Stakeholders**

5. What are your thoughts on the concept of the National Park generally? Do you think they are good/bad/restrictive...etc. Why?

6. What are your thoughts on the Management Plan & Recreation Management Plan – how effective/important do you think these are? Why?
7. What are your thoughts on the conflicting remits of National Parks?
8. What role do you/your organisation have in tourism planning/management?
9. Who do you consider other key stakeholders to be? How do you work with these?
10. Do you think there are opportunities for engaging in tourism planning/management? Do you feel adequately involved?

### **Part 3: Tourism/Communities/Impacts**

11. How do you engage with other stakeholders? How important do you think this engagement is?
12. What do you think are the key impacts from tourism?
13. How do you think these impacts are being managed? Do you think this management is effective?
14. How do you think local residents view tourism?
15. Do you think the local communities understand the key concepts and the importance of tourism to the local area?
16. What are your thoughts on the honeypot site areas? Do you think tourism needs to be diverted to other, less developed areas? Or should it be concentrated on these sites thus leaving other rural areas to be less disturbed?
17. Do you think tourism development is balanced with other industry development in the park?

### **Conclusion**

- Invite questions from respondent
- Inform respondent about access to study once complete

## APPENDIX B

### ***INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS***

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The following respondents participated in interviews in the Yorkshire Dales and New Forest National Parks and have been assigned references for anonymity purposes. These references have been used in the presentation of the results and analysis in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

#### **Yorkshire Dales**

<b>Respondent Reference</b>	<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Job details and/or demographic information</b>
YD1	National Park Authority	Tourism officer
YD2	Council	Tourism/economic development officer
YD3	Regional tourism organisation	Sustainability manager
YD4	Regional tourism organisation	Yorkshire Dales Area Director
YD5	Landowner/farmer	Male, mid 50s, livestock farmer
YD6	Charity	Project manager at conservation charity
YD7	Tourism business	Tourism network co-ordinator, business owner
YD8	Charity	Project manager at conservation charity
YD9	Tourism business	B&B owner in Dales village
YD10	Tourism business	Hotelier on border of the Dales
YD11	Tourism business	Owner of cycling business
YD12	Charity	Project manager of sustainable development charity
YD13	Tourism business	Retail & accommodation business owner on boundary of the Dales
YD14	Resident	Male, retired, permanent resident who grew up in the Dales
YD15	Resident	Female, retired, permanent resident who grew up in the Dales
YD16	Resident	Male, aged 30-40, professional occupation in Skipton, resident for 30+ years
YD17	Visitor	Male, retired, overnight visitor
YD18	Visitor	Male, retired, day visitor
YD19	Visitor	Female, aged 40-50, day visitor

**New Forest**

<b>Respondent Reference</b>	<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Job details and/or demographic information</b>
NF1	National Park Authority	Tourism officer, NPA
NF2	Council	Tourism officer, New Forest District Council
NF3	Land Manager	Communications Manager
NF4	Tourism Provider	B&B Owner within park boundary
NF5	Tourism Provider	Owner of Bike Hire Shop
NF6	Tourism Provider	B&B Owner, within park boundary
NF7	Tourism Provider	Café owner, within park boundary
NF8	Tourism Provider	B&B owner, outside of park boundary
NF9	Resident	Male, early 20s, student
NF10	Resident	Female early 50s, professional
NF11	Resident	Male, retired, long term resident
NF12	Resident	Female, retired, long term resident
NF13	Tourist	Female, early 40s, day visitor
NF14	Tourist	Male, late 40s, day visitor
NF15	Tourist	Male, early 30s, day visitor
NF16	Tourist	Female, early 20s, overnight visitor

## APPENDIX C

### EXAMPLE OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

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**Date of Visit:** .....  
**National Park:** Yorkshire Dales/New Forest  
**Location:** .....

Observation Area	Key guiding features	Notes/Interpretations
Economy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Nature/number of businesses</li><li>- Other industries present</li></ul>	
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Nature/number of residents</li><li>- Engagement opportunities</li><li>- Interactions between host &amp; visitor</li><li>- Infrastructural issues</li></ul>	
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Visual degradation</li><li>- Evidence of pollution</li><li>- Evidence of conservation projects</li></ul>	
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Busy ness of area: cars, people</li><li>- Nature of tourism opportunities</li><li>- Type of visitors: demographics</li><li>- Visitor satisfaction</li><li>- Quality of amenities</li></ul>	
Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Posters</li><li>- Signs</li><li>- Leaflets</li><li>- Personal representatives/rangers</li></ul>	