



National Trust Land in the Yorkshire Dales

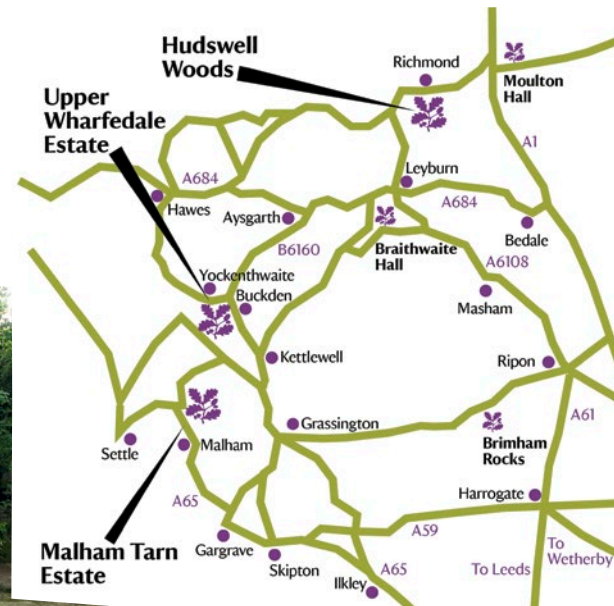


Bringing together
Land, Outdoors
& Nature



This is our philosophy for the land we take care of at the heart of the Yorkshire Dales.

Behind our vision is an important story about landscape evolution; one that can be traced to a shift over time in the things people need and expect from the Dales. It's a process of change that we're bringing about as much through principles and relationships as through policies and master plans.



What you'll find inside

This document tells you about the thinking behind our work in the Yorkshire Dales; what we're aiming for and why. It explains what this means for the people, businesses, wildlife, culture and landscapes that make the Dales special. It also sets out our commitment to keep the Dales alive and relevant to the people who value them – whether you live and work here, come to visit, or benefit from afar.

The document is divided into four short sections:

1. The Dales

A landscape shaped by people, nature, and time

2. What we're working towards

The Dales for ever, for everyone

3. Making it happen

Getting inside the workings of the Dales

4. Our principles

How we work with people



The Dales

A landscape
shaped by people,
nature, & time

The landscapes we look after in the Yorkshire Dales are some of the most striking and well loved in the country. Starting around Malham Cove on the National Park's southern threshold, they take you up to Malham Tarn, over Fountains Fell, and into the valleys and hills of Upper Wharfedale in the heart of the Dales.

Although each of the places in our landscape is distinctively part of the Yorkshire Dales, they can, at times, feel like different worlds. You can be on a wild open fell-top that will blow your breath away on a sodden and bone-cold winter's day. But you might just as easily be warmed by the sun down in a river valley, where villages, woods, fields and farms ease gently into the lie of the land. And from time to time you can find they catch you out in another place entirely; perhaps when a sharp light makes the limestone pavement glow white like teeth, or casts deep shadows up Gordale Scar.

The Dales are not just about views. Part of what makes this landscape special is the way it has been shaped – and is still being shaped – by the action of people, nature, and time. Whether that means rivers cutting valleys and caverns, peat bogs growing on the fell-tops, people mining lead in the past, rearing sheep, watching wildlife, or riding bikes. These are the workings behind the landscape – they come together to make it tick.

Importantly, these processes shape the functions of the Dales, as much as how they look. Understanding what the Dales do, what they provide for people and what we expect from them, guides our philosophy for the land and how we manage it.

What the Yorkshire Dales do for people can be straightforward and practical; like providing meat, cheese, wool, and income to sustain a living – something the Dales have been doing, in one way or another, for generations. Just as importantly, it can be about the difference the Dales make to people's lives when they visit. They might be out hiking, climbing, or cycling. Or they might be having quieter moments; wandering, sitting, watching, and building memories. Either way, the Dales are good at making people who come here happier and healthier. They also provide for people further afield. Even just knowing they're up there, full of fresh air, wildlife and beauty, enriches our sense of the world we live in.

Our philosophy for the land we manage in the Dales is also guided by an understanding that none of this stays the same forever. The forces that shape the Dales – how they look, what we get from them, and what we expect from them – are all acting and shifting over time. The pace varies. From the impossibly slow and geological; to historical epochs – Romano-British to monks to miners to mountain bikers; through to the more personal eras of family generations, down to the choices we make day by day. But all of these move constantly onwards, changing how the Dales work, and changing what we want, what we can get from, and how we care for the Dales. It's an evolving landscape.

Field systems and barns in Upper Wharfedale

One of the striking features of the Dales is that traces of the way the land was worked in the past show through still in the landscape today – like an open historical record. Sometimes the old traces are built into the fabric of something new; like an old barn being converted into a bunkhouse, or ancient roadways like Mastiles Lane, still open as a green lane near Malham Tarn. But even the traces that are out of use, like hut circles on a hilltop or old lead workings, never quite fade from the landscape.



What we're working towards

The Dales for ever, for everyone

It's our role to make positive choices about how and where the land we manage meets the needs and expectations of society, for the long term. And to put it directly, we think the way the Dales are worked is, in some important respects, out of step with the broad range of purposes it can and should deliver. We also think that changes are needed to make sure the landscape is better able to adapt to the future. So while our work here doesn't have a fixed end point, we do have some very clear outcomes in mind:

1. A landscape that does more things for more people

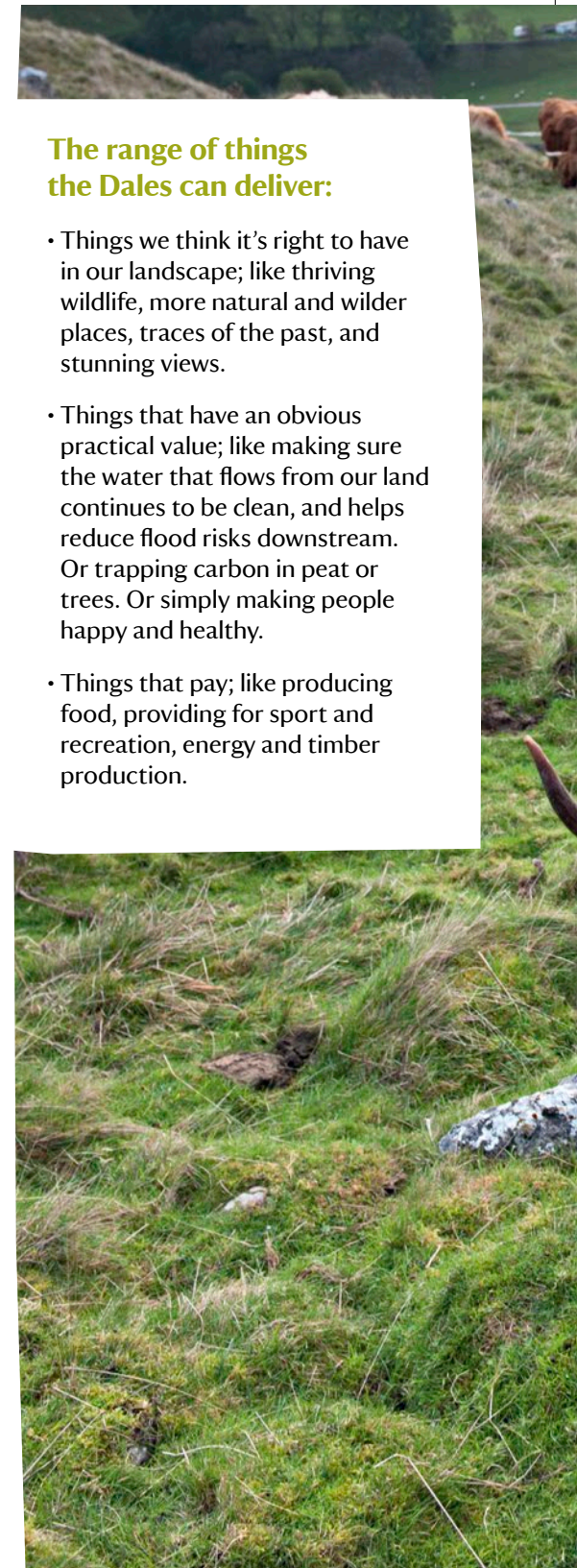
This means we're broadening the focus of land management. Specifically, while livestock production has a permanent place in the Dales, we think it should no longer be the only dominant force in the landscape. We have been working over time with our tenant farmers to integrate other functions and qualities into the way the land is managed. We're doing this because it's our job to manage our land in the Dales for everyone. We also think that delivering this wider range of 'goods and services' is where the opportunities will lie in the future for supporting the livelihoods and way of life of people we work with in the Dales.

2. A landscape that works for the long-term

At its simplest this means thinking ahead, and positively matching the landscape and land management of the Dales to the purposes and expectations that people and society have for it; so that the Dales remain relevant, valued, and protected. But we can't always predict the future, so we're also working towards developing a landscape that is more generally robust and able to adapt. This is partly brought about by increasing the number of purposes we put the land to, meaning we have options available when new opportunities present themselves. And it means the Dales are not beholden to a few markets, or grant regimes. It's also about investing in, and taking care of, the natural assets that underpin the Dales and how they operate; things like the rivers, soils, wildlife, and historic environment. We're doing this because we take a very long view; our land in the Dales we can't sell – we're managing it for ever.

The range of things the Dales can deliver:

- Things we think it's right to have in our landscape; like thriving wildlife, more natural and wilder places, traces of the past, and stunning views.
- Things that have an obvious practical value; like making sure the water that flows from our land continues to be clean, and helps reduce flood risks downstream. Or trapping carbon in peat or trees. Or simply making people happy and healthy.
- Things that pay; like producing food, providing for sport and recreation, energy and timber production.





3. A more natural landscape

It follows for us that a landscape that can integrate more things for more people, and can adapt to the future, is a landscape in which nature has a more powerful and obvious influence. This doesn't mean pushing people out or walking away. But it does mean reinstating natural processes, plants and animals so that they are prominent in every part of our landscape. And at times it means allowing some places to become distinctly wild. We're doing this because we think natural processes and species have value in themselves, and have for various reasons been neglected and degraded in the past. And we're doing it because we know that, in the long-term, nature underpins the viability of our land.

4. A landscape that remains unmistakably the Yorkshire Dales

But far from all of what we do is about change. The Dales are special because of what they are, not just what they could be. So we are careful in our work and in the choices that we make to be authentic to the Dales; to do things that respect the people, nature and pace of change that make up this landscape. And when we do something new, we build on the skills and assets that are there now, rather than wiping away the traces of what came before. Our work is about evolution, not revolution. We're doing this because we love the Dales for what they are. And we believe that a Dales that is more self reliant and adaptable, and which has its value and economy rooted in its natural assets, is an authentic Yorkshire Dales.

Shifting purpose, shifting landscape: how we see the evolution of purpose and pattern in the Dales landscape

The Yorkshire Dales is a precious landscape, but it is also a working and a changing landscape. Some of the big forces that drive and shape the landscape are beyond our control – things like the climate, the economy, politics, markets and grants, and unexpected things like storms, or disease. But we also know that the character of the Dales has always reflected the purposes the land is put to. We have a role there, in choosing how to match the land and how it's run to those purposes. So it's our commitment to play an active part in this evolving landscape.

1. The purposes the land is being put to

Past century

A focus on livestock rearing, for food and to some extent wool; game management, for sport, and the livelihoods that come from both.

Present

The focus of land management remains on livestock farming, but with the important concessions made for tourism, outdoor pursuits, nature, and heritage.

Future

A wide range of purposes, increasingly focused on nature, heritage, tourism, outdoor pursuits and 'services' like river, flood and carbon management, but still with significant livestock farming plus other 'goods' like timber and energy.

2. What that means on the ground

A simple landscape

With productive grazing in the valleys and on the hills, and moorland managed for game.

A segmented landscape

Still reflecting a focus on production, but now interspersed with places where there is dedicated management for wildlife and conservation, peat bogs undergoing restoration on the moor-tops, plus increasingly well-developed access networks.

An integrated landscape

Still based on livestock grazing but at a variety of levels, including light extensive systems; plus more scrub and woodland, recovering wetlands like peat bogs, and a landscape clearly open for people to explore.

Making it happen

The things we are working towards in the Dales are clear and firm. An unmistakable Yorkshire Dales, working for ever, for everyone. And we know this means shifting, over time, to a landscape that is structured around a broader range of purposes than it is now. Things like wildlife, river management, fun and the outdoors; as well as traditional farming.

There's no 'one size fits all' for the way we do this. Sometimes it involves us finding funds and carrying out work in a very direct way. Like when we improve paths and tracks, or re-profile the peat cliffs around the edge of Malham Tarn. But most of our land is not worked directly by us; it's managed in partnership with tenant farmers, as it has been for generations. This means we achieve most of what we do by working with people, finding common purpose, listening to their ideas, trying things out, and evolving the way businesses operate on our land. In many respects this is the most far-reaching work we do, because it involves getting inside the workings of the Dales, and shifting the things that drive the landscape.

Some examples of what this means on the ground are given over the next three pages.

Getting inside
the workings
of the Dales



How will it look?

We know that the purpose we put the land to has a big influence on how the landscape looks. The fields and moors of the Dales are testament to this. The sorts of shifts in purpose we are talking about will have an influence too. Over time we expect the way we work our land in the Dales to produce a less defined landscape; with more gradations between fields, moors, woodland and scrub, and between productive and wilder places.

Making it happen 1: Creating new enterprise opportunities

One of the most straightforward ways of delivering the purposes we want from the Dales is to create business opportunities out of them. To us this makes simple practical sense. If the business is practical and profitable, then the work, and the benefits that flow from it, are likely to carry on. Here are two examples of how this is happening already:

Turning conservation grazing into a business proposition



We've been working closely with the local farmer, Neil Heseltine, for some time. He got in touch when he wanted to diversify his business to include belted galloway cattle. They provide a good complement to his sheep operation, and have the potential to be sold into higher-end niche markets.

Hardy traditional breeds like these are perfect for getting the right balance of grazing on our limestone grasslands, and we were keen to combine support for him to access funds from the Limestone Country Project with an opening to graze our land at Great Close Mire.

Spinning off a tourism joint venture after the success of the Tour de France

Garry and Gill Schofield already run a small campsite at Heber Farm, in Buckden. With the boost to tourist numbers after the Tour de France, they are looking to further develop the business. We are currently working with them to investigate options on how to develop their camping offer, whilst simultaneously developing our own bunkhouse accommodation so that we can jointly provide year-round facilities for hardy walkers and cyclists.

It's the sort of thing where we'd consider being enterprise partners, because what they are doing fits our objective to see more people coming out, getting healthy, and enjoying the Dales. We could add our experience and recommendations, for example in marketing and booking systems. And there are cases where we would put in capital to help get things going.



Tree planting in gills around Yockenthwaite, in Langstrothdale

Tree cover in the Dales has shifted over time, along with markets and priorities for the land. The tree planting we're doing now in the gills up the sides of valleys creates important new habitat and helps with water quality and siltation management in the river. It also provides useful stock management benefits; separating neighbouring flocks, and keeping sheep out of gills, which simplifies rounding-up. It might even provide a source of firewood, where it can be got at easily enough. We also think the trees make the landscape look even more beautiful. We're keen to make more land management choices like this, which serve a range of purposes at once.

Making it happen 2: Re-imagining some of our tenancies

Sometimes getting the right sort of outcomes on the land means re-thinking the terms on which we're working with our tenants and business partners. In essence, the best land enterprise arrangements involve a large degree of shared interest in making things work. And reverse-engineering some of the new, more broad-ranging purposes we want to see for the Dales into old tenancy agreements can be like fitting a square peg in a round hole.

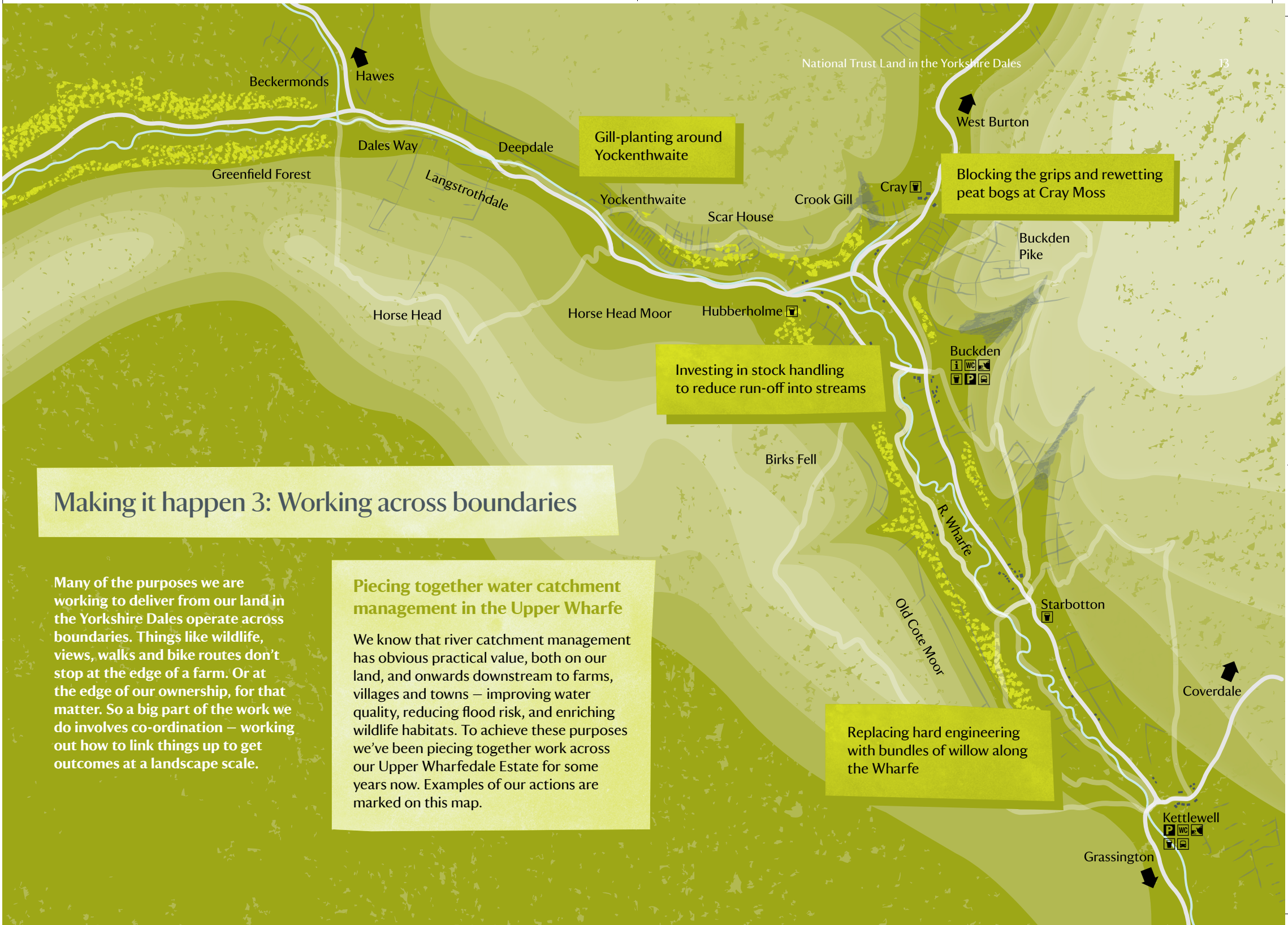
So in some cases, depending on the outcomes we're looking for, and depending on circumstances, we're happy to set things off on a different footing. There's a range of options out there, for example setting up contract arrangements to farm and manage businesses, developing joint ventures, share farming, taking the land in-hand, or simply re-writing tenancy agreements when the opportunity comes up. In all cases, the relationship is key, and the shared desire to forge a viable enterprise that delivers the right outcomes for both parties.



Re-writing the tenancy at Darnbrook Farm

Twenty years ago we took the opportunity of the acquisition of Darnbrook Farm to start a new tenancy agreement from scratch. What this has meant on the ground involves a comprehensive range of changes at a landscape scale: reduced grazing pressure, the introduction of beef longhorn cattle to graze the limestone pavement, woodland establishment, conifer plantation removal, and peat bog restoration.

Starting again like this isn't something that we can do a lot – in most cases we'll work with tenants to evolve arrangements slowly over time, reflecting an often generations-long commitment to the land. But Darnbrook does give a fine example of how fresh thinking can help integrate the wide range of purposes that can be delivered in the Dales.



Gill-planting around Yockenthwaite

Blocking the grips and rewetting peat bogs at Cray Moss

Investing in stock handling to reduce run-off into streams

Replacing hard engineering with bundles of willow along the Wharfe

Making it happen 3: Working across boundaries

Many of the purposes we are working to deliver from our land in the Yorkshire Dales operate across boundaries. Things like wildlife, views, walks and bike routes don't stop at the edge of a farm. Or at the edge of our ownership, for that matter. So a big part of the work we do involves co-ordination – working out how to link things up to get outcomes at a landscape scale.

Piecing together water catchment management in the Upper Wharfe

We know that river catchment management has obvious practical value, both on our land, and onwards downstream to farms, villages and towns – improving water quality, reducing flood risk, and enriching wildlife habitats. To achieve these purposes we've been piecing together work across our Upper Wharfedale Estate for some years now. Examples of our actions are marked on this map.

Our principles

How we work
with people



The strategies and opportunities we take to develop and evolve the way our land in the Dales is worked will change over time; as we learn from experience, and as circumstances change. But our approach to working with people – the principles we abide by – stays constant. These are the principles you can hold us to:

1. Integrity

Understanding that we are dealing with things that impact people's lives – whether tenants, staff, or visitors. So we'll practise common decency – like prioritising a dwelling over a barn – and even-handedness in our decision-making.

2. Openness

We'll try to be absolutely clear and honest about how we see the Dales evolving over time, and what that means to our partners. We know that straight-talking like this allows people to understand our motives, and think ahead.

3. Pragmatism

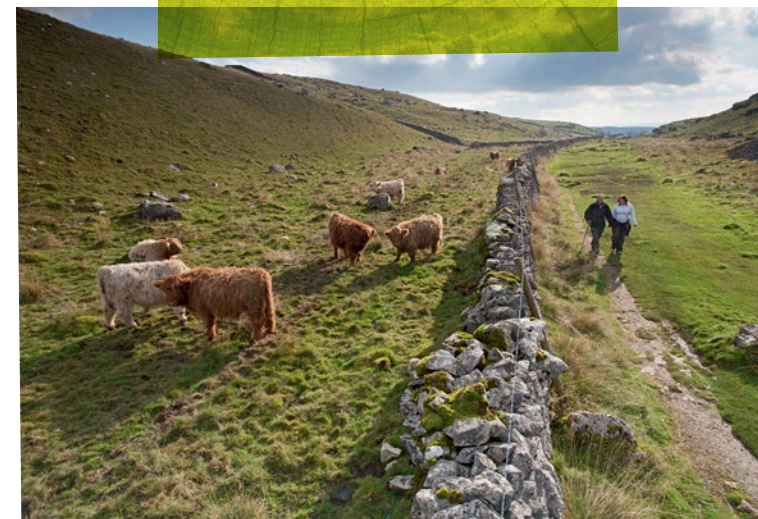
We have a vision for the future of this landscape, but we are open-minded about how it will come about. This means you can expect us to be getting on with it, basing action on experience, and that we will be inviting in ideas and innovation.

4. Permanence

We're here to stay. This means that we will play the long-game, our aims will be consistent, and we will see things through. We know this is critical if people are going to have the confidence to invest in the future and shape their livelihoods around us.

5. Patience

This process of evolution won't happen overnight. We've been working on this for years, and we understand that things like building markets, developing new businesses, and adjusting our working relationships all need time. We're happy to take small steps, so long as we're always progressing steadily in the right direction.





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