



**North
Pennines**
National
Landscape



North Pennines National Landscape Volunteer handbook and agreement

Welcome to the North Pennines National Landscape and UNESCO Global Geopark. We would like to thank you for giving your precious time to support our work. Without the on-going support of our volunteers, the National Landscape team would not be nearly as effective and impactful as it is. We know that you will prove to be an invaluable part of the team and we really hope you enjoy your time working with us.

The aim of this handbook is to provide you with a reference guide to support your volunteering and has been developed to help you have a rewarding and enjoyable experience. We require volunteers to have read and understood the handbook and to confirm your assent to the volunteer agreement at the end. Again, thank you so much for your time.

What is the North Pennines National Landscape?

The North Pennines National Landscape and UNESCO Global Geopark is one of England's most special places – a stunning, upland landscape of wide, open moors, flower-rich hay meadows, intimate woods, inky-black night skies, charismatic wildlife, fascinating industrial heritage, tumbling rivers and dramatic waterfalls. Here you will find a peaceful, unspoilt landscape with a rich history and vibrant natural beauty.

The 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act first established the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation, provided AONBs with protection under planning law against inappropriate development, and gave local authorities permissive powers to take action for 'preserving and enhancing natural beauty' in them.

The North Pennines designation as an AONB was confirmed in 1988. In 2023 all AONBs were re-named as National Landscapes.

In recognition of its world-class Earth heritage and efforts to make the most of this for tourism and education, the North Pennines is also designated as a UNESCO Global Geopark.

The 46 National Landscapes in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland cover approximately 1/8th of the land surface. They include well known landscapes, such as the Chilterns and the Cotswolds, and some with which people may be less familiar, such as the Howardian Hills and Cannock Chase.

The distinctive character and natural beauty of National Landscapes make them some of the most special places in England. National Landscapes are living, working landscapes that contribute approximately £16bn every year to the national economy. Although home to less than half a million people (under 2% of England's population), over two thirds of England's population live within half an

hour's drive of a National Landscape and around 150 million people visit English National Landscapes every year, spending over £2bn.

Together with National Parks, National Landscapes represent our most outstanding landscapes; unique and irreplaceable national assets, each with such distinctive character and natural beauty that they are recognised internationally as part of the global Protected Areas family to be managed in the interest of everyone – local residents, businesses, visitors, and the wider public - and protected for future generations.

You can find out more about the designation, its history and the legal framework that underpins it, from page 9 in the [National Landscape Management Plan](#)

Who are the National Landscape team?

The North Pennines National Landscape partnership is an alliance of statutory agencies, local authorities and voluntary or community organisations which care about, and for, the area. The North Pennines National Landscape staff team and our volunteers work with others to take action to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.

The team's work is guided by the North Pennines Management Plan, a statutory plan produced by the partnership on behalf of the area's local authorities. It is a guide for action by all the partners.

The team's twin priorities are:

- Nature recovery
- Engaging people with nature and cultural heritage

We take a 'landscape approach' to this work – we work with people, in places, at the largest scale we can. This is not a nature reserve – it is a living, working landscape, so collaboration with farmers, land managers and communities is vital.

We focus our work on the special qualities of the North Pennines. You can find more information on this in the [National Landscape Management Plan](#) but we have a strong focus on peatland and upland hay meadow restoration, woodland creation, upland wading birds and their conservation, our rich lead mining heritage, and our internationally important geology. Please make time to have a look at our website to discover more about our current programmes and projects and our legacy of successful work over 20 years.

Who can volunteer?

Anyone aged 14 or over can volunteer (see limitations on working hours for young people below), but not all of our projects will be suitable for under 18's. This will be made clear on each volunteer opportunity. [By default this will be over 18s only, which staff will have to over-ride on the event form. If allowed the project staff must ensure that the risk assessment for the event covers safeguarding]

Children are welcome on many volunteer activities where they are accompanied and supervised by a parent or other suitable adult at all times. Again, each volunteer event listing will make this clear.

The volunteer agreement

For all of our roles, we ask volunteers to sign an agreement (at the end of this handbook) outlining our responsibilities to you, and your responsibilities to us, the public, and your fellow volunteers. This

agreement requires you to be aware of and follow our policies and procedures included in this handbook and those which you may be part of your induction to an activity or project. These policies and procedures form the remainder of this handbook.

From hereon we refer to **the staff team** to mean the staff member or members who are either leading the activity you are volunteering on or leading the project you are volunteering for.

Health and safety

It is the responsibility of all of our staff and volunteers to take care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions. The National Landscape staff team will work with people to ensure this is achieved.

Volunteers must

- never endanger either their own health and safety or that of others.
- comply with all relevant instructions and procedures relating to health and safety and follow any guidance provided.
- inform us of any personal health and safety requirements.

All activities will be risk assessed and appropriate control measures taken to reduce risk. All volunteers will be informed of the control measures for their chosen role or activity by the staff team.

You should be aware of the following generic risk and control measures where they are appropriate to your volunteer role:

Unsupervised or lone working

Many types of volunteering take place in the North Pennines National Landscape which are not directly supervised (i.e. there is no staff member present during the activity). These might range from undertaking bumblebee surveys to surveying old mining sites using photogrammetry.

Many sites in the North Pennines can be dangerous, with unrecorded mine shafts and collapsing structures, the weather can be challenging, and your own personal health issues can come into play even in benign conditions near to safety.

For all these reasons **some activities are never suitable for lone working** and this will be indicated on the volunteer opportunity.

We strongly recommend that you should only undertake unsupervised work with another responsible adult. This could be another volunteer, or a non-volunteer friend/partner. However, where our risk assessment considers lone working to be acceptable and if working alone is unavoidable, **you must follow our lone working procedure and use the safe off-site buddy system.**

Safe off-site buddy system

Any responsible adult can be designated as a buddy (partners, friends, fellow volunteers, or staff if available), providing they understand their responsibilities and are happy to act as such. The buddy should be office or home-based for the duration of your site visit and have full mobile phone coverage.

In this context, 'on-site' means lone working or meeting one or more people in a remote location, either outdoors or within farm buildings etc. This is intended to include people we know, as well as people we don't know. It does not mean meetings in villages and towns with more than one person,

for example a working group meeting or large group events. However, if you are meeting a person not previously known to you one-to-one, no matter where, then this should be recorded.

Volunteers are responsible for recording their site visits beforehand, designating and briefing a buddy, and contacting their designated buddy before and after being on-site. The method of contact is by telephone and, where possible, orally rather than via a messaging service.

Procedure on the day for volunteer

1. Ensure your emergency contact and next of kin (NoK) details are up-to-date on Better Impact [Emergency contact details might be the same as or different to NoK. Kate is checking that these can be made compulsory fields]
2. Contact your buddy at the beginning of the day with details of the planned activity, which should be recorded by, or provided to, the buddy in writing. Detail needed:
 - locations, including likely routes taken to and from site and on site, car parking location and routes from the car. [What3words](#) is a useful way of recording these which is also used by emergency services.
 - name and phone number of landowner/farmer/meeting organiser etc.
 - your mobile number
 - known medical conditions (at your discretion)
 - your car registration
 - purpose of visit
 - estimated time of return (allow for getting back into signal range and any potential delays, as your delayed return will trigger an emergency response)
 - procedure for buddy to follow in case of non-response (see below)
3. Put a reminder on your phone to contact your buddy **before** the allotted return time.
4. Inform buddy of setting off to site.
5. Inform buddy of arrival on site (if signal allows)
6. Inform buddy of leaving site (if signal allows)
7. Inform buddy of arrival home / safe location

If you do not report back at the expected time, the buddy should attempt to contact you. **If they fail to make contact, the buddy will contact the emergency services.** The buddy will be relied upon to respond appropriately in the event of the volunteer failing to report in and they should know the procedure for raising the alarm.

Please remember while the National Landscape team endeavours to put suitable systems and controls in place to protect volunteers, there is an individual responsibility for volunteers not to put themselves at unnecessary risk. Before setting out please ensure you have done the following:

- Read the specific risk assessment for the activity or site ahead of setting out on your site visit.
- Check the weather forecast and make sure you are dressed appropriately for the weather and have sufficient food and water. If you are unsure, postpone your activity.
- In the winter, ensure your car (if using) is adequately equipped for emergencies (with e.g. blankets, snow shovel)

If you have any known health issues which might put you at additional risk whilst in a remote location alone – do not work alone.

Personal property

You are responsible for your own personal property and for keeping it secure and safe.

Accidents

If you suffer an accident (or near miss) whilst volunteering with us, you (or someone on your behalf) must report it as soon as practicable after the event. Let a member of staff know and they will ensure the incident is recorded on our system.

Alcohol and drugs

You must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while volunteering for the North Pennines National Landscape. If you are prescribed drugs by your doctor which may affect your ability to perform your voluntary work, you should discuss this with the staff team.

Tool safety

Where the use of tools is part of an activity you will be instructed in the safe use (including transport and storage) of any tools you are asked to use. Training will be provided where appropriate. If you have any worries about whether you have been adequately instructed, or about safe working practices, **you must raise it** with the staff team.

First aid

There will always be a first aid trained member of staff leading or supervising an event, and for group activities they will always have a first aid kit at the site of the activity. Please let the staff team know if you are also a first aider if you are happy to do so.

Naturally occurring hazards

Tetanus

Cuts, scrapes and prickles may expose you to bacteria which cause tetanus. The dormant bacterium exists in the soil and can sometimes cause fatal illness when it enters the body by attacking the central nervous system. Renew your booster every 10 years.

Leptospirosis or Weil's disease

There are two strains of this dangerous disease.

Lepto. Icteorhaemorrhagiae is carried by rats and passed on by contact with their urine. It can be fatal. As rats frequently live near open water the disease can be found in ponds and streams.

Lept. Hardjo is associated with cattle and is found in areas frequented by these animals. When working in or near water or cattle, wear waterproof dressings on any cuts, use rubber gloves and if your hands get wet, wash them before eating or touching your mouth or eyes. If you develop flu-like symptoms after working near water or cattle, visit your doctor and mention Weil's disease.

Lyme disease

This is an infection caused by Borrelia bacteria and passed by infected ticks when they bite. Ticks are usually active between April and October in moorland, grassland, marshland, and woodland. They wait

on vegetation, such as bracken, for a host animal to pass. Check for ticks after working in these habitats. If you start to feel ill after finding ticks, visit a doctor and mention tick bites.

[Further information from NHS](#)

Poisonous and dangerous plants

There are a number of native plants which you may come across which have the potential to cause harm.

Plant	Harmful if ingested	Harmful by contact	Plant	Harmful if ingested	Harmful by contact
Bluebell	X		Giant hogweed*		X
Bracken	X	X	Hemlock*	X	
Black bryony	X	X	Horse chestnut	X	
Buttercup	X		Ivy	X	X
Cuckoo pint	X		Nettle		X
Daffodil	X		Nightshade	X	
Dog's mercury	X		Spurge	X	X
Fool's parsley	X		Water dropwort	X	
Foxglove	X		Yew	X	

*Other umbelliferous plants – such as cow parsley and wild parsnip - are also harmful by contact in the presence of sunlight. This is called phyto-photo-dermatitis.

Poisonous fungi

There are a number of dangerous and deadly fungi. You should not eat any wild fungi unless you are experienced in fungi ID or have had the OK from an expert.

Dangerous animals

There are no animals in Britain which have deadly bites or stings, however, some people may be susceptible to anaphylactic shock as a result of a bee or wasp sting. Please let the staff team know if you know this to be the case.

Adder

This is a venomous snake found on heath, bog, and woodland edges throughout the North Pennines, active from late February to late September. An adder will only bite if startled. Call 999 or go to A&E immediately. The following local hospitals have anti-venom readily available:

Hospital	Post Code	Area	Switchboard
Cumberland Infirmary	CA2 7HY	Carlisle	01228 523444
Royal Victoria Infirmary	NE1 4LP	Newcastle Upon Tyne	0191 233 6161
University Hospital of North Durham	DH1 5TW	Durham	0191 333 2333
Darlington Memorial Hospital	DL3 6HX	Darlington	01325 380100

[Further information from NHS](#)

Wasps and bees

Some wasps and bees nest on the ground so it's worth checking over an area before starting any work. Others nest in trees so check any tree before doing any work.

Livestock

Much of the North Pennines and many of its special habitats are managed using grazing livestock. Whilst most livestock will not present a danger some can be aggressive and/or inquisitive. In particular bulls and cattle with calves can at times be aggressive.

If a volunteer activity is taking place in a specific location and is being led by a member of staff they will check with the farmer/land manager about the presence of stock and ensure that it is safe for the session to go ahead. Many activities will take place away from livestock but this may not always be possible/necessary. If at any point you have concerns about safety around livestock you should raise this immediately with one of the members staff present.

Where activities are taking place along a route or where there is a walk to the works site along public rights of way it may not always be possible to avoid livestock.

If you are carrying out volunteer activities in a lone working capacity, or without a member of staff present you should always consider any risk posed by livestock. If you are ever unsure about your safety around livestock you should postpone or finish the activity.

Weather

Heat

During the spring and summer the weather can be quite hot. Working outdoors for long periods of time without shelter can lead to heat exhaustion, sun burn, dehydration, and sunstroke. Take precautions by wearing sunblock, a hat, and keeping your skin covered. Drink regularly to replenish fluid loss through sweating and take plenty of breaks in the shade (where possible).

[Further information from NHS](#)

Cold

The North Pennines is exposed. When working outside always take plenty of warm clothes to add layers if you start to feel cold. Extreme conditions can lead to hypothermia and frostbite. Keep moving to generate heat in your muscles but if you feel uncomfortable retreat indoors as soon as you can.

[Further information from NHS](#)

Dogs and volunteering

Dogs (except for assistance dogs) will not normally be allowed on volunteering sessions unless specifically flagged as a dog-friendly session.

Volunteers working alone must ensure their dogs are on a lead around livestock and during bird breeding season (March to July). At other times and away from livestock your dog must be under

close control. Please remember that whilst volunteering you are representing the National Landscape, and that even well-behaved dogs can cause stress to, or be perceived to be worrying, livestock. A high standard of dog behaviour is therefore expected.

Working with the public

Sometimes during volunteering activities, you will be visible to the public. Please act responsibly and be polite and courteous. Most members of the public will be interested in what you are doing. Some may be rather wary of you and others may approach you quite boldly to find out what is happening. Do be prepared to answer any questions and explain...

1. You are volunteering for the North Pennines National Landscape
2. The activity has been carefully planned as part of a work programme/management plan
3. How to become a volunteer
4. How to contact the North Pennines National Landscape staff team for more information
5. What difference you are making
6. Refer any formal enquires to the staff team (number below)

Inclusion, diversity and equality

We expect everyone involved in our organisation to abide by the principles of dignity and respect for all in their work at all times. If there are ways that we can make the volunteering experience more accessible and inclusive for you, please let staff know.

The National Landscape staff team has developed a set of values which it aspires to and which we hope volunteers will aspire to as well. They are summarised below and a full version can be found on our website.

We aim to be:	Collaborative	Creative	Trusted
Behaviours we aspire to:	Supportive Empowering Inclusive Responsive	Innovative Adaptable Curious Listeners Inspiring Outcome-focused	Honest Respected Professional Transparent Knowledgeable

Confidentiality

As a National Landscape volunteer, you will be in a position of trust. You may come across confidential information whilst carrying out your volunteering activities. Please keep this information confidential and don't communicate it outside of the National Landscape team you work with.

Data protection

All volunteers have a legal responsibility to collect, store, and use personal data with regards to individuals in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018. All information will be handled and stored sensitively and used only for its intended purpose.

Our data Privacy Notice explains how we collect, use, and share your data. We will review and update this privacy notice to reflect changes in our services and feedback from service users, as well as to comply with changes in the law.

Your volunteer details will only be held by the North Pennines National Landscape for up to a maximum of seven years. On occasions limited contact information may be shared with partners, delivering an event as part of our work. You can request to be removed from our database at any time by contacting a member of the North Pennines National Landscape team.

For the purposes of Data Protection, Durham County Council is the Data Controller for your information.

Click to read the [Privacy Policy](#)

Expenses

Some volunteer roles are eligible for travel expenses. This will depend on the project, how it is funded, and its aims. If the volunteer role you are undertaking is eligible for travel expenses, this will be stated on Better Impact. In these circumstances mileage will normally only be payable for the portion of your journey which takes place within the North Pennines¹. You can fill in a monthly claim on Better Impact.

Certain projects whose aim is to make connections with those living distant from us (in urban areas for example) may have more generous expenses policies.

If claiming mileage expenses, any volunteer that is eligible to do so must ensure their vehicle is insured for business use, is taxed and has a valid MOT certificate. Evidence of insurance must be uploaded to Better Impact. Mileage is paid at the same rate as staff, following Durham County Council rates and policy (currently 45p/mile).

For all other expenditure, **prior approval must be sought** and receipts obtained for any relevant claims.

Insurance

Volunteers will be indemnified through the insurance held by our host authority Durham County Council, dependant on the volunteer carrying out their activities within the guidance issued to them. The policies will cover employee's liability, public liability, professional indemnity and personal accident.

Communications and social media

Volunteers are bound by the same 'rules' and professional expectations as paid employees. This will include the use of social media and security of personal information.

¹ We use the North Pennines National Character Area boundary which is more generous than the North Pennines National Landscape. The staff team will discuss with you what this means for your claims.

Please do repost or share North Pennines National Landscape social media posts, should you wish to, on your own channels with appropriate comments from you. As a volunteer you have a duty not to breach any confidentiality or post anything which could damage the reputation of the National Landscape or our partner organisations. No personal post should appear to be 'on behalf of' the North Pennines National Landscape.

Compliments and complaints

Volunteers are advised not to accept gifts. If a gift is offered, the volunteer should seek the advice of the staff team who will advise on the appropriate action to be taken.

Should a complaint be made to a volunteer about any aspect of the National Landscape staff team or our work, volunteers should immediately inform the staff team, who will follow up the complaint in line with our procedures.

If a complaint is made either formally or informally about a volunteer, the complaint will be investigated in line with our procedures. The National Landscape team reserves the right not to offer volunteer opportunities to individuals where there is a good reason.

Any volunteer who has a grievance should discuss this with the National Landscape management team [01388 528801 and ask for a member of the management team].

Young persons' working hours and age limitations

There are rules that regulate what times of the day you can work and for how long. These are different depending on your age.

14-year-olds

- during term time, you can only work for two hours on weekdays and Sundays and for five hours on Saturdays
- during a school holiday, you can work for up to five hours on a weekday or a Saturday and no more than two hours on a Sunday
- you cannot work before 7.00am or after 7.00pm

15- and 16-year-olds

If you're 15 or 16 and are working while you're still at school, your rights are almost identical to those of 14-year-olds. However, you are allowed to work for up to seven hours on Saturdays or during the school holidays.

16- and 17-year-olds

If you're no longer at school and you're 16 or 17, the law refers to you as a young worker. Because you will no longer be at school, there are fewer restrictions on when you can work.

Employees/volunteers are only able to work for eight hours every day, or a total of 40 hours over the course of a week.

Agreement

Our responsibilities to you are to:

- provide a clear induction on the nature and purpose of all activities.
- make you aware of all key health and safety issues.
- provide appropriate training.
- provide personal protective equipment if required for the work.
- provide public liability insurance.
- reimburse reasonable documented expenses where eligible.
- support you to make the most of your volunteering journey.

Your responsibilities are to:

- behave reasonably and not bring the organisation into potential or actual disrepute.
- adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.
- abide by the risk controls measures put in place by National Landscape staff according to our risk assessments and health and safety policy.
- make your own assessment of additional risks where necessary.
- not work alone, except where authorised, and to follow the lone working policy in this handbook if doing so.
- report any issues of safety, safeguarding, discrimination or harassment that cause concern either for you or on behalf of others.
- seek any clarification needed relating to volunteer activities, and do not carry out activities for which you feel unqualified or under-prepared.
- declare any conflicts of interest.
- provide reasonable notice if cancelling attendance.
- inform us of (and update us on) any medical conditions, or accessibility (physical or sensory) needs, which we should be aware of.

I sign to confirm that I have read and understood the content of this handbook and that I agree to adhere to my responsibilities in this agreement.

If you require any information, please contact the staff team on 01388 528801, or email info@northpennines.org.uk