

Brilliant Businesses

Yorkshire Dales National Park Centres



Visitor welcome

As you can expect, the staff employed in all of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Centres (NPCs) have a sound background in welcoming visitors and helping to improve the quality of their stay; last year we received over 400,000 through the doors of our four Authority owned centres. Our services include active promotion of local events and those which help people to learn about the cultural heritage and special landscape of the area. In addition we offer guided walks and other activities and our staff are experienced in assisting people to enjoy a more sustainable visit, whether this is by promoting public transport or walk routes from the car park, or where they are staying.



Going through the Green Tourism Business Scheme assessment process back in 2011, it became clear that we were doing much more than that – as we proudly gained two Bronze awards (Aysgarth Falls and Grassington) and two Silver awards (Malham and the Dales Countryside Museum – DCM, Hawes). The assessment reports emphasised our areas of strength, which included the interpretative displays and the high levels of staff environmental awareness. In addition, year on year many of the centres support community events, such as the Grassington and Swaledale Festivals; brass band concerts and Christmas Fayres in Hawes; and the Malham Safari. And we collaborate with local communities in other ways, such as housing the Hawes archives at DCM; or the active involvement of NPA staff in the Malhamdale Initiative.



Adding value

In addition, the Authority has developed and supported visitor payback schemes, such as the Three Peaks Project, and has worked with partners over the years to develop schemes such as Donate to the Dales. At our National Park Centres we've always actively supported others, with a variety of collecting boxes ranging from fell rescue to the RSPB displayed near our tills.



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In terms of product miles our mantra is always to use one journey, where possible, rather than two. For example, The Visitor newspapers are delivered to the National Park Centres along with any retail stock, internal post etc. and any spare space in the van is used to take paper and cardboard recycling to Settle Swimming Pool, where a community recycling scheme raises funds.

Centre Improvements



We're thankful to the scheme for also highlighting a number of areas where improvements could be made – particularly in terms of energy saving. Suggestions from each centre's audit have been built into our rolling maintenance programme for the centres – with much success in the last year. Some examples include looking into the viability of upgrading to LED bulbs for the display lighting systems. Quotes suggested that these lights would use a tenth of the energy compared to the existing lighting systems, so we updated to LED lighting in three out of the four centres. This has proved expensive initially, but the energy and cost saving estimated at Aysgarth Falls alone, indicates that in one year the savings will more than equal the installation costs, so well worth it!

The Green Tourism Business Scheme is validated by Visit Britain through the International Centre for Responsible Tourism. Find out more at www.green-business.co.uk

In addition, we have improved the amount of roof insulation to the recommended 300mm thick in two centres, with a third to be completed soon; and some windows have been upgraded to double glazing at Aysgarth and Malham.

Contact the Sustainable Tourism Officer on 0300 456 0030 or visit www.yorkshiredales.org.uk

The accreditation process also highlighted other things which were relatively easy to introduce, such as creating a green team tasked with keeping green issues to the forefront of running the centres; or improving the consumption of water in the boot/bike/dog washing areas by adding water butts to collect rain water.

On the retail side of things, the value of having local stock in the shop is appreciated, and items such as local prints, cards and postcards have been sold for a number of years. More recently we have piloted projects which offer a wider selection of local products, such as hand knitted hats and scarves; as well as some eco products, such as wind up torches. This is an area which we are keen to develop in the future.

All these actions are designed to build on an established and valued visitor resource – The Yorkshire Dales National Park Centres – and show how in a challenging economic climate, good examples of sustainable practise can still be included in the day to day business.



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