

News

New group to reduce fire damage in National Park

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A new partnership has been set up to reduce the damage caused by summer fires in and around the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Members of the North Yorkshire Dales Wildfire Group (NYDWG) are currently encouraging landowners to draw up detailed plans they hope will reduce the devastating impact of moorland blazes.

The group is made up of the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA), the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Moorland Association.

Trevor Lund, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue group manager for Richmondshire, said the idea for the organisation partly followed the disastrous week-long fire in 2007 that destroyed hundreds of acres of Ilkley Moor.

“The need for such a group has been further highlighted by the recent fire on Grassington Moor,” he said.

“The aim of the group is to create a series of moorland fire plans.

“We want to build a strong network that encourages collaboration and cooperation and allows rural communities to take an active role in protecting their environment and the economy from the effects of wildfires.

“Initially, each large landowner will produce a map of their land containing information needed by the Fire Brigade, like easy access points for vehicles, water sources and availability of equipment. It will also have on it a point at which we could rendezvous if there was a fire.”

The group will also launch a publicity drive to try to make members of the public aware of the ways they can help reduce the risk of summer fires and to explain the dangers they pose to wildlife – particularly rare and important ground-nesting birds.

Adrian Thornton-Berry of the Moorland Association said 75 per cent of the world's remaining heather moorland was found in Britain.

“These areas play an important role in the local economy by providing employment and a pull for tourists and they are a crucial haven for ground nesting birds,” he said.

“The fire plans are a positive step forward in helping to protect these fragile habitats.”

Alan Hulme, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Ranger Services Manager, said: “It is hugely encouraging to see the different parties around the table all working towards a

common purpose.

“The uplands of the Yorkshire Dales National Park may store an estimated 8.5 million to 10.5 million tonnes of carbon. Some of it would be released every time there is a fire, which would obviously have worrying consequences in the light of climate change.”

For further details please contact Trevor Lund on 07710 738534 or Adrian Thornton–Berry on 01969 663096.

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For more information, please call the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority's Media Officer Nick Oldham (full days Monday and Friday and Tuesday mornings) on 01756 751616. Alternatively, please contact Communications Manager (Acting) Karen Griffiths on 01756 751619.

1. All Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority media releases can be viewed on-line by visiting www.yorkshiredales.org.uk
2. The Yorkshire Dales National Park is one of 14 National Parks in the UK. It is administered by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, the purposes of which are "to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage" and "to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the park". In carrying out these purposes, the Authority has a duty "to seek to foster the economic and social well being of local communities". The National Park is administered by an Authority of 22 members, made up of county and district councillors and members appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to represent parishes or in recognition of their specialist skills or knowledge.
3. The Moorland Association (www.moorlandassociation.org) aims to halt the loss of heather moorland in England and Wales and to conserve and enhance this internationally important habitat for the future.