Response to the consultation on the future composition of the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District National Park Authorities

Introduction

1. The Historic Houses Association represents Britain’s historic houses, castles and gardens in private ownership. There are more than 1,600 HHA properties throughout the UK of which about 60% are open to the public, either as day visitors or by appointment. The HHA estimates that approximately two-thirds of the built heritage is privately owned and maintained. Between them HHA members represent, collectively, one of the greatest ‘ownerships’ of listed buildings in Britain: both I and II* properties as well as of Grade II properties, many being ancillary buildings. More than two thirds of the historic built environment is owned and managed by private owners. The HHA welcomes 24 million visitors each year and one in five of all HHA properties offers educational visits - there are more than 300,000 such visits annually.

2. The beneficial effect that public visiting to these places has on the wider economy is estimated at an additional £1.6 billion, from inbound tourists alone. Around 26,000 people are directly employed by HHA members or are employed in businesses in their grounds.

3. The costs of maintaining Britain’s private houses, castles and gardens are significant and expenditure by private owners in looking after England’s historic environment is substantial. HHA owners spend more than £85 million per year (Independent Study 2015), but the backlog of urgent repairs at HHA member houses totals around £500 million. Ensuring the economic viability of historic houses is, therefore, of great importance.

4. Britain’s historic houses are an important resource, benefiting the entire nation. 80% of international visitors say that their principal reason for visiting Britain is connected to heritage and culture. Historic houses provide character, distinctiveness and a sense of place and help create pride in where people live. 87% of British people think that the historic environment plays an important part in the cultural life of the country.
5. It is widely acknowledged that one of the most effective ways to conserve a historic building is to ensure that it has an economically-viable use and this principle is referred to in the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Composition of the Yorkshire Dales Authority**

6. The HHA understands that the Yorkshire Dales National Park is to be extended by 25% to the north and the west.

7. As a consequence, the HHA agrees that the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority should increase in size from 22 to 25 members, as proposed.

8. However, the HHA believes it is important that the Yorkshire Dales Park Authority recognizes the importance of the historic built environment as well as the natural environment within the boundaries of the national park and that membership of the authority should reflect this.

9. In addition, the HHA believes that representatives of the private sector should be strongly represented among the so-called ‘national’ members of the authority.

**Composition of the Lake District National Park Authority**

10. The HHA understands that the Lake District National Park is to be extended by 3% to the south and the east.

11. Since these are small extensions, the HHA agrees that the Lake District National Park Authority does not need to change in composition, as proposed.

12. However, in general, the HHA believes it is important that the Lake District Park Authority recognizes the importance of the historic built environment as well as the natural environment within the boundaries of the national park and that membership of the authority should reflect this.

13. In addition, the HHA believes that representatives of the private sector should be strongly represented among the so-called ‘national’ members of the authority.

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21 March 2016