

## Uplands Alliance: Core Narrative

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The text here is devised to be the core narrative for the Uplands Alliance on which the other communications tools will be based. For example, an edited version of the content here will be used to create a presentation or poster. This version of the core narrative has been agreed by the Uplands Alliance Steering Group and is the basis for designs and further creative work.

### Communication aims:

- Build consensus between Upland stakeholders
- Increase awareness of the value and benefits of the Uplands
- Deliver a consistent and unifying message about the role of the Uplands Alliance

### Title: Our Uplands: Prosperity and the future

The Uplands Alliance describes five components of a healthy, sustainable Uplands environment. This paper provides an overview of why England's Uplands matter and our collective approach to sustaining their future.

- 1. Thriving Upland businesses and communities**
- 2. Responsible, active custodians**
- 3. Public awareness and pride**
- 4. Investment in return for public benefit**
- 5. Collective action**

### Our Uplands

The valleys, hills, moors and mountains that form England's Uplands are some of our most iconic landscapes of international importance: examples include the Lake District, Dartmoor, Yorkshire Dales and the Peak District. In total, some 17% of the UK's land area is considered to be upland. They are working landscapes that have been shaped and influenced by human endeavour for thousands of years. They are also stunning environmental assets, providing a home to some of our most loved wildlife and attracting over 70 million days in visits each year.

It's a crucial time for the future of our Uplands. As our relationship with Europe changes and existing funding schemes come to an end, now is the time to chart a new and ambitious future for our Uplands, with the support of Government. This will require many of our existing businesses to diversify, innovate and embrace change. Change can be unsettling but by building a shared vision and set of priorities for the Uplands, we can pool our collective strengths and ensure the benefits we all enjoy from the Uplands environment can be sustained and enhanced.

**The Uplands Alliance** brings together many different organisations from all sectors that have a role to play in the future of England's Uplands environment. We recognise that there are differences of opinion and a complex array of pressures on the landscape, but we firmly believe we can play a key role in building consensus and moving the debate towards positive action to ensure the Uplands continue to thrive. Now is the time to cherish and support our Uplands and to invest in their future.

**Our Uplands are highly valuable environmental assets** delivering multiple benefits to society, the economy and our communities. They are a resource that with the right investment and management can support the drive to a low carbon economy, create jobs, provide valuable goods and services, and encourage more active, healthy lifestyles. Many of our Upland environments are on the doorstep of major urban conurbations, providing easy access to healthy environments for millions of residents.

What's more, the Uplands have a crucial role to play as the **impacts of climate change** become more profound and the need to respond ever greater. Our Uplands provide crucial carbon stores and well maintained peatlands will continue to absorb carbon and play a part in the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### **What have the Uplands ever done for us?**

The multiple public benefits the Uplands deliver are currently under-valued and taken for granted. This has to change if we are to **build an effective alliance for the future health of the Uplands**. Our Uplands are popular destinations, places to explore and discover, and attract millions of visitors and tourists each year. Beyond providing a landscape to walk, run, cycle and ride, they are places that provide an impressive range of environmental and economic services. We believe multiple benefits can be delivered and enhanced on the same piece of land for mutual benefit.

Here's a snapshot:

#### **Uplands provide...**

*(please note this is an indicative, not exhaustive list and does not need to be presented hierarchically)*

- A globally important carbon store, helping to tackle climate change
- An environment that can help to alleviate flood risk and slow the flow of rainfall
- Wildlife habitats providing a sanctuary for some of our rarest species
- 70% of our drinking water
- Space for recreation that can improve health and wellbeing
- Beautiful landscapes that are internationally recognised
- Farmed and sporting heritage landscapes of historical significance
- Fabulous food, especially locally produced lamb, wild game and beef.
- Forestry goods including timber for construction and fuel
- Local employment opportunities
- Spaces for traditional, rural and place based innovation

#### **The facts speak for themselves:**

**75%** of the uplands have been designated as a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Natural England)

**53%** of England's terrestrial Sites of Special Scientific Interest lie within the uplands (Natural England)

**300** million tonnes of carbon are stored in English peatlands. Upland soils are one of the largest carbon store in England (Natural England)

**70** million day visits are made to upland National Parks each year from across the country (Natural England CHECK REFERENCE)

## **What needs to change?**

The benefits the Uplands deliver can no longer be taken for granted. Only through careful and considered stewardship, land management and long-term investment and planning can these multiple benefits be realised and enhanced. This will require all those businesses, farmers, gamekeepers, landowners and public organisations to play an active role in ensuring a healthy future for the Uplands.

We need **new economics for a new age**, where the benefits of our environmental assets are recognised and valued for the benefits they bring to society. The Uplands can, and should, be a test-bed for a new contract between farmers, land owners, tenants, public agencies and the public themselves, a contract that sees a much more direct, evidential link between payments and public benefits. We recognise that many of the businesses that nurture our most spectacular landscapes are financially vulnerable and support is required to enable these businesses to adapt and capitalise on the new opportunities.

There is a crucial role for national government and policy makers here, too. In a post-Brexit world, the future vitality and economic viability of the Uplands will require a clear commitment and the long-term funding mechanisms to support the Uplands for the benefit of us all.

## **What's needed now?**

The Uplands Alliance describes five components of a healthy, sustainable Uplands environment.

### **1. Thriving Uplands businesses and communities**

The Uplands will be the home to thriving businesses that can adapt, diversify and embrace the future needs of society and help sustain our upland environment. There is enormous potential for increased recreation, carbon sinks, eco-tourism, crafts and sustainable food production. We need to support our Uplands businesses and communities to enable them to adapt and innovate.

### **2. Responsible, active custodians**

We need farmers, moorland managers and other land managers to increasingly become active custodians of the Uplands environment, taking responsibility for its upkeep and protection by committing to reduce pollution, increase biodiversity and proactively adapt and embrace the need for sustainability.

### **3. Public awareness and pride**

The public – tourists and local communities – must see the Uplands as their land to value, explore and enjoy. Our Uplands are precious public places; we need to build awareness and instil a sense of pride by demonstrating that these are landscape to cherish and celebrate.

### **4. Investment in return for public benefit**

Now is the time to be bold and ambitious. These landscapes need to be supported, managed and enhanced. This will require public investment and new financial structures that recognise the public benefit the Uplands deliver. Like all public services, we need to invest and reward appropriately in order to maintain and enhance these benefits. The Uplands Alliance believe there is an overwhelming case for public investment in return for public benefit and to sustain and enhance natural and cultural capital.

## **5. Collective action**

It's time to draw together our collective strengths and unify our efforts to maintain the Uplands for future generations. There will always be differences of opinion but we need to agree on the fundamental needs of the landscape alongside the needs of businesses and communities that depend on healthy, vibrant and diverse Upland communities.

### **Time for change**

The valleys, hills, moors and mountains that form our Uplands are historic landscapes that have changed and adapted over time to meet the needs of society. Another period of change is upon us. Now is the time to recognise the enormous public benefits our Uplands and their custodians deliver and to invest and prioritise their sustainability at a national level in order to see these benefits maintained.

The UK Government has committed to setting the gold standard in protecting and growing natural capital and to use this approach as a tool in decision making. The Uplands provide the ideal test-bed for this approach.

The UK is an international champion for the protection of our planet, and securing a sustainable future for the Uplands will build on this success. Change for the Uplands can be positive and the Uplands community can and should embrace and shape its future. By learning from the best Uplands businesses, farmers and custodians, we can amplify the public benefits and help farmers, land managers and other businesses capitalise on this significant opportunity.