

Written evidence submitted by National Parks England

Impact of Covid-19 on DCMS Sectors – Call for Evidence

June 2020

Summary

1. National Parks England (NPE) exists to provide a collective voice for the nine English National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority. NPE is governed by the Chairs of the ten Authorities. Our response to the [DCMS Call for Evidence](#) represents the collective view of officers who are working within the policies established by the National Park Authorities (NPAs) and follows internal consultation with the Historic Environment and Sustainable Tourism Working Groups. Individual National Park Authorities may submit separate comments, which will draw on the specific issues for their particular area.
2. Our statutory purposes, programmes and links with our local communities means we have a very grounded understanding of the impacts of Covid-19 on the tourism and heritage sectors. We have set out our response to the questions posed in the call for evidence in the following pages. In summary, NPE has witnessed the severe impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on rural economies and communities and urges DCMS to collaborate with National Parks to provide support to sectors under its remit. We do wish to stress four key points:
 - a. The immediate impact of Covid-19 is not yet fully understood, but based on current observations, is likely to be severe.
 - b. The domestic tourism market is a key economic driver for the rural communities that exist in National Parks. Additional funding to support the domestic tourism market is recommended. An early demonstration of the commitment to the tourism sector would be for Government to fund the repurposed version of the award winning English National Park Experience Collection.
 - c. The impact to the rural economy because of Covid-19 has been severe, and Government support to deliver a green, resilient, and inclusive rural recovery is critical. We recommend that DCMS works with National Parks to design and deliver programs and funding for rural communities. Working closely with Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships in their areas, National Park Authorities could pilot a rural recovery fund, delivering rapid, targeted support direct to rural businesses with flexibility and low transaction costs.
3. If you require any more information or have any questions regarding this submission please contact us.

1 Question 1: What has been the immediate impact of Covid-19 on the sector (including, but not limited to, culture and the creative industries; civil society; sport; tourism; heritage; publishing, media and journalism; telecoms)?

1.1 **Top line:** The immediate impact of Covid-19 is not yet fully understood, but based on current observations, is likely to be severe. The multi-disciplinary nature of the sector means that impacts will be felt widely, across a huge range of disciplines, organisations, and individuals.

1.2 There is a distinction that needs to be made with regards to immediate impact of Covid-19 - the impact during full lockdown and impact during easing restrictions. This has been outlined below:

1.3 Impact to business during lockdown

1.3.1 **Funding:** Many heritage attractions and smaller businesses receive little or no core funding and rely heavily (or solely) on income generated by visitors which ceased at the start of lockdown. An example of this is the Helmsley Walled Gardens at North York Moors National Park, whom would not have been able to reopen without crowdsourced funding. In this sense COVID-19 has exacerbated the already significant challenges faced by cultural organisations and their partners. Loss of seasonal income, which also contributes towards the creation of financial reserves for the quieter autumn/winter months, will have significant financial implications for the management of historic sites supported by this income.

1.3.2 **Protection of cultural heritage:** For museums and galleries, risk to collections has significantly increased as the costs for conservation and collections management are unable to be met. The inability to meet basic requirements for insurance policies around 'reasonable care' and 'occupation' definitions through staff furlough and lack of income, risks voiding insurance protection in such radically changed circumstances.

1.4 Impact to business during easing restrictions

1.4.1 **Funding:** A recent businesses survey of SMEs in Dartmoor National Park revealed that 40% of businesses have closed, while 30% are only partially trading. We believe this is typical of what is being seen across protected landscapes as a result of the impact of Covid-19. Despite easing restrictions, many businesses that fall under DCMS' remit are unable to re-open for a number of reasons including a lack of clarity from government over safe operating practices, furloughed staff, and lack of personal protective equipment. Not having this income, which helps sustain these organisations through the quieter autumn and winter months creates a risk of business failure.

1.4.2 **Business adaptation:** The North York Moors National Park Authority (NYMNPA) is already receiving requests from businesses to allow for variations and temporary easing of restrictions that they are more easily able to operate or open. This includes the use of outdoor space and creation of outdoor shelters in order to allow customers to interact with shop staff safely with social distancing measures in place. It is anticipated that other National Parks will be facing similar requests to support business adaptations. The National Park Authorities have also been working diligently to adapt our working practices in our business – with many staff still working from home, and we have also been adapting our visitor facing offer as we moved into the easing of restrictions.

- 1.4.3 National Parks are also seeing tensions between tourism business who want to re-open, and rural communities who feel that more should be done to protect National Parks, put less strain on local shops and services, and prevent visitors

1.5 Impact to visitors during lockdown

- 1.5.1 During lockdown, National Parks saw an almost immediate and dramatic drop in visitor numbers, of up to 95% across our National Parks in England. For example, the Peak District National Park experienced a 95% reduction in users of the popular Monsal Trail, a multi-user off road trail for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
- 1.5.2 **Public participation** in projects, engagement and events have been severely limited, if not completely suspended in all National Parks. For example, the hugely successful Yorkshire Dales Cheese festival has been cancelled for 2020; the Sill, the key visitor service centre for Hadrian's Wall, in Northumberland National Park has been closed; and the largest attraction in the North York Moors National Park, the heritage steam railway, will not be able to operate if the 2m social distancing rule is maintained. The National Park Authorities moved their offer to help bring the National Parks to people's homes. For example, the Peak District National Park provided engagement activities through the #StayHomeStayWild online initiative.
- 1.5.3 Generally speaking, many heritage organisations, activities and events rely heavily on volunteers to function and are unable to function at all without their input. However, the volunteering cohort is heavily weighted towards the older generation, who are also disproportionately affected by Covid-19, and the precautions that they need to avoid contracting it. Some members of this group isolated prior to the official lock down announcement and they are likely to continue with social distancing and isolation measures for longer than others. Thus, not having these volunteers will disproportionately affect the sector.

1.6 Impact to visitors during easing restrictions

- 1.6.1 **New and diverse audiences:** That said, the National Parks have noticed a marked increase in new visitors, including young people and visible minority communities, often first-time or returning to National Parks after having not visited for some time¹. This is a very positive development that we see recognizes National Parks as 'landscapes for all' and we are working to support this newer audience stay connected to our national landscapes and to enjoy their access with respect.
- 1.6.2 **Safety and visitor management concerns:** The impact of the release of the public from lockdown has also created concerning situations. As a result of lockdown restrictions being lifted on May 13, enabling exercise in the countryside with unlimited travel, many National Parks have faced problems with significant increased car traffic, litter, and fire inadvertently started by open fires and BBQs. This has resulted in many communities within the National Parks feeling overwhelmed and anxious at the prospect of crowds making social distancing difficult. All National Parks have been working with partners across the landscape to encourage "respect" for the place, its people and each other.

¹ For example, in the Lake District, a survey completed in late May/early June calculated that 68% of visitors were new or late returning visitors

1.6.3 Further, as social distancing restrictions are still in place, National Park Authorities are unable to offer the many activities that are normally provided, and regularly visited sites such as visitor centres and museums are closed. This has caused increased pressure on honeypot sites, and in some cases, safety concerns, when visitors illegally parked and prevented emergency vehicle access in breach of a 'Clearway' order.

1.7 Impact to communities during lockdown

1.7.1 Many National Park Authorities have strong relationships with their neighbouring universities. Degree courses for sectors under DCMS' remit are being affected as many of these courses involve fieldwork training which cannot be delivered in other ways. The Covid-19 lockdown is likely to disproportionately affect shorter courses such as Masters degrees and apprenticeships.

1.8 Impact to communities during easing restrictions

1.8.1 **Crimes against heritage:** Northumberland NPA has also expressed concerns about the effects of crime against heritage assets arising from the lockdown and subsequent easing measures. The extent of this crime at sites across the country is currently unknown but will be better informed with additional data as sites come out of lockdown.

1.9 Impact to National Park conservation and enhancement² programs during lockdown

1.9.1 **Postponement and cancellation of projects:** Due to a loss of funding and social distancing requirements, many National Park projects in this sector had to be stopped entirely. The postponement and cancellation of projects as a result of the crisis has significant impacts for organisations and businesses. In addition, it threatens the fabric of the fragile historic places which will continue to deteriorate in the absence of funding for projects focused on their repair. For example, the Traditional Buildings Restoration Pilots, being delivered by National Parks, with Natural England and Historic England, for DEFRA have been affected to varying degrees. Some site works have halted completely – others have continued, albeit slowly.

1.9.2 **Impacts to quality of work:** This has had a knock-on effect impacting professional services and advice required to maintain the quality of heritage infrastructure and monitoring and cultural programs. For example, heritage contractors and services (archaeologists, conservation architects, historic building recording), a sector that already operates on slim margins, had to put many complex, larger projects on hold, often with no strong idea of timescales for restarting. Covid-19 reduces our ability to advise land managers on matters relating to the historic environment, from advice on new Countryside Stewardship agreements to day to day management advice. Some National Parks, such as the Peak District, have already noticed a loss of quality in some areas of work that they monitor such as archaeological assessments or time-critical surveys and fieldwork. Conversely, some smaller firms, dealing with projects where social distancing measures can be put in place, have been able to adapt quickly.

1.10 Impact to National Park conservation and enhancement programs during easing

² First set out in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by the [Environment Act 1995](#), the first statutory purpose of National Park designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.

restrictions

- 1.10.1 The **ongoing impact** (upon owners, suppliers, skilled craftspeople, conservation architects etc) is not yet known. This could affect those restoration projects that have secured grants, but which have not yet started. For instance, the changes to the National Heritage Lottery Fund programmes have meant that proposals being worked up for submission this year, such as the Cheviot Hills Heritage Project in Northumberland National Park, are now having to be delayed. Conversely, some projects, such as Northumberland's Peatland Restoration and Traditional Farm Building work, have continued. That said, we anticipate further, perhaps significant, loss of jobs and skills within professional heritage services (e.g. archaeological consultancy).
- 1.10.2 **Historic Environment surveys** are less time critical than wildlife surveys, however there are still greater implications from conservation works unable to take place due to lockdown restrictions and those reliant on volunteers. One example of this is the bracken suppression programme in Northumberland National Park and the Peak District National Park which is limited to early summer when there is sufficient bracken growth for effective bruising and cutting and prior to the release of bracken spores hazardous to health. By missing one season's bracken suppression work, this has an impact on archaeological stratigraphy as the bracken returns with greater vigour when left to do so. Being unable to carry out work on site at the critical moment will mean a delay of at least 12 months in cases such as this, and create issues for time-constrained funded project delivery.
- 1.10.3 Covid-19 has also **diverted the attention of land managers away** from the aforementioned key conservation and enhancement activities to respond to immediate issues related to visitor pressures arising from the easing of lockdown restrictions after May 10th.

2 Q 2: How effectively has the support provided by DCMS, other Government departments and arms-length bodies addressed the sector's needs?

- 2.1 **Provision of emergency funding** - Emergency funding that has been provided by DCMS, other Government departments and arms-length bodies has been a lifeline to many businesses and organisations that fall under the remit of DCMS and are to be found in National Parks. For example, the immediate response to the sector's needs by Historic England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England, particularly through surveys which resulted in targeted funding responses for heritage organisations, has been hugely valued.
 - 2.1.1 Understandably, the creation of what is in effect a welfare scheme in a matter of weeks was always going to be challenging. However, the **mechanics of actually delivering support and issues of cash flow** for business and operations that are often marginal at the best of times means that the support does not always reach where it is needed most urgently. For example, some independent heritage organisations were unexpectedly barred from some retail and hospitality grants by eligibility criteria that did not recognise their unique operating framework. This reinforces the case for future support being coordinated with Local Enterprise Partnerships and wider business support initiatives.
 - 2.1.2 In some cases, **funding has fallen short** of what is required to maintain services, projects or business at a basic level. For example, in the Yorkshire Dales National Park,

the Historic England Covid-19 emergency response fund to resource a conservation project under the 'Heritage at Risk' stream was unfortunately unsuccessful in what was a hugely over-subscribed scheme. Feedback from Historic England indicated that the available budget was close to £2m with applications for funding totalling £6.5m – all received within a very short application window. This clearly shows there is much wider demand for financial assistance in the heritage sector than there is capacity at the moment.

2.1.3 Funding to date has mostly focused on immediate needs, but **long-term funding to sustain DCMS sector businesses and organisations is also needed**. Because of the loss of visitor income for much of 2020, the additional costs incurred to put adaptations in place to create viable businesses, coupled with a loss of visitor confidence means achieving business recovery will likely take several years. Thus, it is obvious that funding is required beyond the current initial 6-month post-pandemic period to help the tourism and heritage sectors stay viable and survive.

2.2 **Provision of tools** - Visit England's 'quality mark' program and Sentiment tracker are invaluable tools to help the sector plan for visitors³. The work being done by Defra and Natural England to disseminate information about the Countryside Code has also been valuable. Albeit, it would have had greater impact on behaviour if it was provided earlier during the lockdown and ways need to be found for better engaging of more diverse audiences in the Countryside Code. Looking forward, informed by the findings of this inquiry, we hope that the Government also provides more directional advice that is targeted to new visitor audiences.

3 **Q3: What will the likely long-term impacts of Covid-19 be on the sector, and what support is needed to deal with those?**

3.1 **Top-lines:** The long-term impacts of Covid-19 will be far reaching. We anticipate that less funding will be available for DCMS sector organisations, short-term impacts will be exacerbated, and rural economies will be strongly and negatively affected. Support is required to support domestic tourism, a green, inclusive rural recover, and to hire more National Park rangers.

3.2 Long Term Impact

3.2.1 **Less funding availability** - We anticipate that funds for lottery and other projects are likely to reduce yet further and become significantly more competitive. It is envisaged that it will be extremely challenging to maintain the same conservation and outreach outcomes that we have enjoyed pre-Covid.

3.2.2 **Exacerbated short-term impacts** - Further, the short-term impacts listed under Q1 will rebound to have long term implications for the sector. Covid-19 will only exacerbate the problems the sector faces, particularly through impacting on the economic and social benefits caused by shutdown of historic sites and properties and loss of income from cafes, shops and events.

3.2.3 With particular reference to the cultural heritage sector, we should expect a range of negative impacts including irreversible physical damage and loss to historic buildings, archaeological sites, intangible heritage and collections through the lack of investment and a loss of access to data sources and specialist knowledge.

³ <https://www.visitbritain.org/new-industry-standard-development-response-covid-19>

- 3.2.4 **Major and long-term impacts to rural economies** – Covid-19 and the lockdown have already had a huge impact on the communities and economies of National Parks, which cover 10% of England. A lack of visitors, especially older people, those with underlying health conditions, and overseas visitors, combined with ongoing economic uncertainty which will result in more cautious consumer spending, will reduce visitor numbers and associated income. This includes but is not limited to loss of income for accommodation providers, shops, cafes, attractions, and transportation services.
- 3.2.5 Many rural businesses in this sector were already operating on tight margins prior to Covid-19, and the pandemic has put their long-term viability into question. If these businesses close, they will remove key parts of the visitor infrastructure of National Parks and will also undermine the viability of other parts of the highly interconnected rural economy, such as farming and other land-based economy activities. There is the risk of a vicious cycle triggered by a loss of one part of a multi-layered economy.
- 3.2.6 It is worth noting the **contribution of heritage and tourism sectors to the British economy**. The *Heritage Counts: Heritage and the Economy* survey published in 2019 highlights that the heritage sector produced a total Gross Value Added (GVA) of £31 billion, provides over 464,000 jobs, and in 2018, heritage-related construction activities generated £7.1 billion in GVA in England employing over 100,000 people. A UK National Parks survey revealed that 52% of UK residents visited a National Park last year, and that tourism accounts for £4,368,445 million towards the English economy. Further, 35% of UK citizens “totally agree” that the presence of cultural heritage influences their choice of holiday destinations, and in 2018, £17 billion was spent on heritage-related visits and trips. Covid-19 will invariably have a large impact to the sector long term.

3.3 What Support is Required

- 3.3.1 To an extent there will need to be creative solutions to this problem, but it is critical that there is long-term, flexible support for the ongoing creation of skills and knowledge, and to ensure the long term survival of cherished parts of our heritage and culture.
- 3.3.2 **Investment in domestic tourism:** The Government commissioned an independent review of Landscapes, led by Julian Glover that reported last year. We agree with recommendation 14 from the Landscapes Review⁴ that landscapes should be leaders in sustainable tourism. NPE recommends that funding be delivered for investment in a repurposed, and award-winning, English National Park Experience Collection⁵ (ENPEC) that focuses on domestic visitors once travel restrictions within the UK are lifted, and then positions National Parks for tourism success once international borders reopen. In order to deliver on this ambitious agenda, a bid for c. £300k has already been submitted to Visit England, under the Discover England Fund. National Parks are looking for Visit England and DCMS full support on this. National Parks will also work closely and secure support or resources from local Destination Management Organisations.
- 3.3.3 **Investment in a green, inclusive rural recovery:** A transition to a green recovery where sustainability, climate action, low carbon businesses, and local food use is important. NPE recommends that DCMS works with National Parks to design and deliver programs and funding in rural economies. National Parks are well placed to use their

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>

⁵ The English National Park Experience Collection (ENPEC) is a collaboration between nine English National Parks. The project has developed experiential tourism within the National Parks, by creating a collection of 72 immersive experiences, supported by 85 local accommodation providers.

local networks to deliver targeted rapid, efficient, and flexible funding that promotes a shift towards a green sustainable economy, and maintains and enhances natural capital.

3.3.3.1 This targeted funding could go towards:

- Understanding consumer behaviour through better and more granular data gathering in order to establish viable programming, sustainable transportation, and continuing community support for National Park activities and programs.
- Support on recovery planning, product development and adaptations. For example, a survey of over 400 North York Moors National Park tourism related businesses revealed that businesses are particularly looking for support to build consumer confidence, reassure visitors, understand visitor behaviour (through data collation and analysis), and promote attractions and visitor accommodation once lockdown restrictions are lifted.
- Bespoke marketing initiatives which highlight the importance of nature to health and wellbeing, as well as positive marketing encouraging responsible visitation of National Parks.
- Low impact, low carbon travel offer for visitors and communities to get into and around National Parks, including improved infrastructure (to encourage modal shift, cycle lanes, dedicated trails), and integration (smarter ticketing, digital connectivity).
- Investment in comprehensive digital infrastructure/connectivity in rural areas. This would enable better online communication and data sharing and make it easier to maintain networks and partnerships through online collaboration.
- Supporting a green recovery of cultural heritage businesses and associations, who may be unable to protect collections, accept visitors due to social distancing measures and lack of PPE, or operate because of a loss of core volunteer base.
- Support businesses and to carry out practical heritage conservation projects placed on hold due to the financial uncertainties.

3.3.4 **Additional funding for rangers:** Additionally, funding for hiring additional rangers, whom have been critical in the initial management of large visitor numbers to National Parks, is a key, and easy, support that could be provided to English National Parks. The rangers' role is to talk to the public to increase understanding of the area and encourage responsible use and enjoyment of the area. Their presence alone has helped maintain some order to sites and limited some anti-social behaviour. Investing in additional rangers to help manage visitor pressure would be in line with the recommendations of the Landscapes Review which called for 1,000 more rangers in our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There is scope to do this in a way that develops skills and supports new jobs by developing apprenticeships for rangers to engage with new audiences and in countryside skills.

4 What lessons can be learnt from how DCMS, arms-length bodies and the sector have dealt with Covid-19?

4.1 **Top line:** It is likely too early to have a full overview of this issue, however, those organisations most adaptable and flexible will be in the best position to survive the crisis. We recognize that local partnerships and networks have been a cornerstone to supporting DCMS sector organisations during this time of crisis. However, we have also observed that there is a need for better data, more versatile funding, a bigger recognition of the connections between health and well-being to natural spaces, and better communication and direction from Government.

4.2 **The need for more robust data:** The STEAM database and Visit England consumer sentiment tracker have been important tools to help predict and manage initial consumer

behaviour. However, although we collect data as tourism and heritage bodies respectively, this lacks coordination, is rarely collectively reviewed consistently, and there is a need to create impetus in the sector itself to provide data, for example, by making it a condition of grants annually. Survey fatigue is a huge issue, and DCMS could do more to ensure requests for information are coordinated between different funders (so there is one ask and not multiple asks) and occurs at set times annually. There also needs to be steps taken to remove barriers to data sharing between organisations who are all working to the same ends in supporting the creative, cultural and tourism sectors.

4.3 The need for more versatile funding: Funding received by organisations to date has targeted immediate survival needs, however long-term funding support remains an issue, as described in 2.1.

4.3.1 Additionally, it is important to recognize that in some cases, organisations who responded to previous government overtures to diversity their income have been the ones most penalised. For example, public facing services, such as Destination Management Organisations and National Park Authorities who proactively sought to diversify funding and be more commercial in approach have been the ones that were most impacted by Covid-19.

4.3.2 Further, funding has not reached certain parts of the cultural heritage sector. For example, freelancers have been particularly vulnerable because current schemes are missing the fact that many freelancers earn less than the required minimum from self-employment or other sources to meet eligibility criteria for rescue support funding. Diversified and better targeted funding for those overlooked by the current funding schemes, such as freelancers, will be critical to helping the sector adapt and remain viable post- Covid-19.

4.4 The strength of local partnerships and networks: It has been encouraging to see rapid networks and partnerships coming together to both understand the impact of Covid-19, and to offer support in several ways. In reality, the normal work of National Park partnerships and networks has been strengthened by the impacts of this pandemic, and it will take some time to understand the value of these interventions.

4.4.1 For example, Sector Support Organisations (SSOs), regional enforcement bodies (such as police), national bodies (i.e. Association for Independent Museums), and regional networks (some of which are coordinated through local authorities, such as Culture East Sussex) have played a crucial and essential role in supporting the sector through this difficult time. Despite having limited or no access to funding, some of these organisations have provided everything from support for the development and submission of rescue funding applications to supporting revised planning and providing advice on wider funding opportunities. These networks have been responsive and utilised their significant knowledge of the cultural, creative, visitor, and natural environment to respond with innovation at a difficult time.

4.5 Connections of National Parks to Health and Wellbeing: The pandemic has also brought into sharp relief inequalities such as in access to green space and fresh air, and the health and wellbeing of communities, staff, and volunteers. As National Parks, and also as a Nation, we are more aware of how people's mental and physical health is being impacted by the pandemic and ensuing lockdown. We are working hard with partners to do more to value the incredibly important connection between health and wellbeing and access to green and blue spaces, as evidenced by our Covid-19 recovery plan.

5 How might the sector evolve after Covid-19, and how can DCMS support such innovation to deal with future challenges?

5.1 On Evolution of the Sector: The Covid-19 pandemic and our ongoing response to it may help to highlight the important interrelationship between heritage, the arts, nature, health and wellbeing.

5.1.1 **Supporting domestic tourism:** In times when international travel is complicated or not possible, National Parks may become even more important as breathing spaces. This will generate both opportunities, such as a changing demographic of new visitors, and new pressures, as can be seen from the recent inundation of visitors to honeypot locations in some National Parks. National Parks are keen to adapt to this new reality and see 'slow tourism' – deep, authentic, cultural and experiential tourism - as a way to evolve. Slow tourism will allow for a deeper understanding of people and places they visit, as well as contributing towards a circular economy which supports a sustainable tourism agenda.

5.1.2 **Digital content and a green recovery:** A key way we see the sector evolving is through its use of digital content. The significant interest in ongoing digital engagement (which for some organisations was in the region of an 800% increase) as shown by the “#Outdoors, Indoors” social media campaign⁶, has demonstrated the importance and potential of culture and heritage, even if accessed online, to contribute towards people's resilience and well-being in times of crisis.

5.1.3 Further, the use of new websites (such as www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/carparkstatus) have enabled National Parks to better manage visitors. This digital solution has been introduced by several National Parks. However, in its current format requires “boots on the ground” to keep it live and up to date. National Parks England would welcome the opportunity to work with DCMS to make this a fully digital offer, enabling a more agile and efficient service that we can embed into our work. Digital connectivity in rural areas remains a barrier to accessing these resources. Ensuring plans for increased connectivity take into account the needs of the visitor economy in a post-Covid world will also be important.

5.2 How DCMS can support innovation to deal with future challenges : We anticipate that Covid-19 will leave a greater impact on the sector than the 2008/9 financial crash, with a significant contraction of the economy with impacts on discretionary spend by a cautious public. The likely ongoing public caution around the risk of contracting Covid-19 will also lead to avoidance of anything but essential activities by areas of the population who are either at greatest risk from the virus or who continue to fear contagion, meaning that recovery for the cultural heritage, historic environment, and tourism sectors are likely to be slower than for other areas of the economy.

5.2.1 **Supporting domestic tourism:** The opportunity of enhancing our domestic tourism offer can support our recovery, particularly for the rural economy which is already under strain and for which tourism represents a significant contributor. Initiatives such as the 'stay safe' charter mark⁷ will be important innovative tools to support businesses to build

⁶ The '#OutdoorsIndoors' campaign, created by Northumberland NPA and used by several NPAs, has used social media to connect people with nature in their gardens and provided an avenue to share online education materials and host virtual social interactions such as online quizzes.

⁷ https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/helping_the_tourism_industry_recover_from_covid_4_may_2.pdf

consumer confidence in the sector. Aligning this charter closely with the messages on the Countryside Code will allow business the confidence that they can offer a safe welcome and communities the confidence that businesses also care about it being a safe place to live. Support from DCMS through funding the repurposed English National Park Experience Collection , as discussed in 3.3.2, will help National Parks to understand the potential changing pressures on heritage and tourism in National Parks, including the potential for greater engagement of larger numbers and different types of visitors.

5.2.2 Providing targeted funding: It is obvious that funding will be a key way that DCMS can support innovation to deal with future challenges. Further, as our understanding grows, flexibility and adaption in the level and types of support response will be key. Support is likely to be needed for much longer than the active measures for preventing the spread of Covid-19, as the true impacts will take some time (even years) to work through the system fully. Examples of this include:

- Consideration of tax relief on cultural and historic properties, including their maintenance and repair, which would encourage owners to repair and reuse, and resulting in knock-on benefits for wellbeing and carbon storage.
- Funding and specialist support for digital platforms to help build capacity and understanding of how to raise income through digital platforms and avoid digital saturation, and as well as for SSO's such as Culture24 to help build digital leadership and literacy.
- Better access to a wide range of funding support for the evolution of heritage and tourism businesses as they adapt, reimagine, and redesign operating models, particularly where this represents a move towards greater local enterprise and partnership.

5.2.3 Promoting education and advocacy: DCMS can provide critical support through strong championing of the sectors it is responsible for with other departments. This includes collaborative, cross-departmental working and advocacy between DCMS, Defra and MHCLG, particularly in:

- Advancing the contribution made by cultural heritage and access to natural spaces to health and wellbeing, and ensuring it is part of the government thinking around a national recovery plan.
- Funding to support the objectives of the Joint Statement on the Historic Environment in National Parks⁸ to support our shared ambitions recognising the role that cultural heritage has to play in the nation's recovery to build a better, greener future.
- Funding for marketing and promotional campaigns at the appropriate time to build public confidence in visiting landscapes, live events, cultural programmes and heritage sites, to support industry recover and support a resilient rural economy.

⁸ This accord was jointly signed by Historic England and Natural England, and their counterparts in Scotland and Wales, as well as all United Kingdom National Parks (see: https://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/23842/Historic-Environment-Joint-Statement-2015.pdf)