

Traffic and transport in the Peak District National Park

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Traffic and transport in the Peak District National Park

The Peak District National Park [PDNP Fact Sheet] is at the heart of England, surrounded on all sides by urban areas, roads and motorways – the M62 in the north, the M1 in the east, the A50 in the south, and the A34 and M6 in the west. The South Trans Pennine Rail Line – also known as the Hope Valley Line – crosses the Park between Sheffield and Manchester.

The Peak District is one of the most easily accessible National Parks in the UK. Its boundary is within an hour's drive of

around 16 million people, a third of England's population, and it receives more than 10 million visitors from England each year. Most visitors (85%) come by car which puts pressure on the Park's transport systems and causes congestion on narrow rural roads. In addition, an estimated 86% of the 17,000 households in the Peak District National Park have access to a car or van.

Traffic levels in the National Park have steadily increased over recent decades, especially

on cross-Park routes where the volume more than doubled between 1980 and 1999. One of the reasons for this is the national increase in car ownership. Between 1991 and 2005 the number of UK households without access to a car decreased by 7% to 25%.

The environmental impacts of visitor, business and resident traffic are a significant threat to the special qualities of the Peak District National Park.

A balancing act: The role of the National Park Authority

The Peak District National Park Authority is the planning authority for the National Park. It has two main purposes:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park; and
- to promote opportunities for understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park.

Where the two come into conflict, conservation must take priority. The Authority is also required to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities.

The National Park Authority is not a highway authority. The day-to-day operation and maintenance of roads and railways in the Peak District National Park are the responsibility of seven highway authorities and train operating companies and Network Rail. Under the Environment Act 1995 highway authorities and transport providers such as bus and train companies, must 'have regard to National Park purposes' when carrying out their work.

A key job of the Peak District National Park Authority is to work in partnership with other organisations to address traffic and transport issues. By doing this, the Authority hopes to preserve the special and valued features of the National Park. The Authority is involved in a number of transport partnerships, including:

- Peak Connections aims to make using public transport as easy as possible.

- The Derbyshire Dales and High Peak Accessibility Partnership brings together transport and service providers to make it easier for residents to access employment, health, shopping and leisure facilities.
- Community Rail Partnerships seek to increase service levels and passenger numbers on railway lines in the area. The National Park Authority is involved in two such partnerships – Derwent Valley (Derby to Matlock), and High Peak and Hope Valley (Buxton, Hope Valley and Glossop lines). Together these cover each of the railway lines which serve the National Park and its immediate surroundings.
- Road Safety Partnerships bring together local authorities, the emergency services and others to try to reduce the number of traffic accidents on the area's roads.

The Peak District National Park Authority's transport policies have to balance the conservation and enhancement of the National Park environment with the needs of residents, businesses and visitors, and the requirement for cross-Park traffic. Where these factors

appear to be in conflict, the Authority must give priority to conservation. Any measures should also reduce vehicle speeds and improve road safety – several roads in the area have poor accident records and the death toll to grazing animals on the open moorland is high.

The National Park Authority owns and manages a number of pay and display car parks throughout the National Park, with the money raised from parking charges going towards management of the National Park and the Authority's estates.

Getting to the Peak District National Park

A 2005 visitor survey on how visitors travelled to the Peak District found that:

USED A CAR	=	8.5 MILLION	85%
CAME BY COACH	=	900,000	9%
WALKED	=	300,000	3%
CAME BY BUS OR TRAIN	=	200,000	2%
CYCLED	=	100,000	1%

Who uses the roads?

It is not just visitor traffic that causes problems.

National Park residents also use the roads for non-recreational purposes such as work, shopping and taking children to school.

Around half of all residents commute to jobs outside the National Park, particularly to Manchester and Sheffield, many of them by car.

Where the two come into conflict, conservation must take priority. The Authority is also required to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities.

A survey in 1998 on the A6 near Rowsley estimated that, even on a Sunday, 16% of local car journeys were non-recreational and a further 26% did not stop in the Park. On a weekday some 47% of local trips were non-recreational and a further 21% did not stop in the Park.

There is also significant cross-Park traffic in the form of freight and business travel. Most of this traffic goes by road. The average split of vehicle types across five main A roads on a weekday is 83.7% cars and light goods vehicles, 14.7% heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and 1.7% other vehicles. However, HGVs make up a quarter of the weekday flow on the A628, the main cross-Park road.

Noise... Congestion... Pollution...

Excessive road traffic causes a number of problems – to the environment, to local communities and to human health – as well as threatening the special qualities of the National Park.

Petrol and diesel engines produce a wide variety of pollutants, the main ones being carbon monoxide, nitrogen monoxide and dioxide (collectively called NO_x), volatile

organic compounds and tiny particles. When released into the air these substances can damage both the environment and human health.

More traffic, faster cars and bigger lorries threaten the peace and tranquillity of the National Park. More than 80% of visitors say that peace, quiet and clean air are important or very important to them.

Traffic congestion can be a particular problem at popular places (known as 'honey pots'),

such as Bakewell [Bakewell Fact Sheet], Dovedale [Dovedale Fact Sheet], Castleton [Castleton Fact Sheet], Chatsworth and Hartington, causing frustration and delays to both residents and visitors. Many villages lack off-street parking, and residential areas can be blighted by careless parking by visitors. Lack of car parking facilities is also one of the factors that spoil people's visits – a 2005 survey [Visitor Survey] showed that 10% of visitors found this a problem.

Traffic management

Some locations within the Park are so popular that traffic management schemes have been introduced to control where people park and how they get around. The Upper Derwent Valley [Upper Derwent Fact Sheet] is a good example. The area's expansive reservoirs, dramatic scenery and good footpath network are easily reached by car from Manchester and Sheffield. This leads to heavy traffic

congestion at weekends and bank holidays. To combat this, the highway authority, the landowner and the Peak District National Park Authority decided to close part of the road at the busiest times and to run a subsidised bus service along the closed section. Other popular visitor spots with traffic management schemes include the Goyt Valley [Goyt Valley Fact Sheet], the Roaches and Stanage Edge.

Park and ride schemes are another option to manage traffic flow and volume in the Peak District National Park. Although large-scale park and ride schemes inside the Park are not appropriate, the small-scale scheme operated for the annual Bakewell Show on two days in August has been very successful. Smaller schemes may also be possible in, for example, popular areas such as Castleton and the Upper Derwent Valley. Another possibility is for longer-distance park and ride schemes from the edge of the National Park to the main tourist hotspots, although this is unlikely to happen in the short term.

More sustainable transport

The National Park Authority supports greater use of more sustainable methods of transport that are in keeping with the purposes of the National Park, such as **public transport and cycling**.

83% (104) of Peak District parishes have a scheduled bus service, with a further 2.4% (3) having a supermarket or community bus. Buses and trains provide an important service for local residents, especially the 17% who don't own a vehicle. They also provide an alternative for visitors although only 11% of visitors use public transport to get to the Peak District. Initiatives such as Peak Connections and the Community Rail Partnerships aim to increase public transport use among both residents and visitors.

Visitors are encouraged to walk or cycle to the Peak District National Park, and some 4% do so. Inside the National Park there are traffic-free cycle and walking routes along disused railway lines from Ashbourne and Cromford towards Buxton (**Tissington and High Peak Trails**) and from Bakewell towards Buxton (the **Monsal Trail**). The Manifold Way runs from Hulme End to Waterhouses, along the route of the disused Leek and Manifold Valley Light Railway. The Trans-Pennine Trail runs through the Longdendale Valley [Longdendale Fact Sheet] in the north of the National Park and the Pennine Way starts at Edale before crossing the Longdendale Valley at Torside.

The Peak District National Park Authority has three cycle hire centres, at Ashbourne, Derwent and Parsley Hay, and Derbyshire County Council has a cycle hire centre at Middleton Top. Some 30,000 people use the centres every year.

There are a number of national cycle routes running through the Peak District National Park, including the **Pennine Cycleway** (National Route 68). There are 58 miles of dedicated off-road cycle tracks. In October 2009 a **£1.25 million project** was launched to invest in cycling infrastructure and promote cycling in the Peak District National Park.

In 2004 a **feasibility study** looked at a proposal to reopen the Monsal Trail between Buxton and Matlock as a railway line. The railway linked Derby to Manchester until it was closed in 1968. The idea was to reduce the amount of vehicles that travel across the Park, and also to improve public transport for local communities. The study concluded that reopening the line is not currently economically viable, although it might be in the future.

Further information

- **Peak Connections**
- **East Midlands Journey Planner**
- **Derbyshire Timetable Finder**
- **Derby and Derbyshire Road Safety Partnership**