

PDNPA – Recent Achievements

The Peak District National Park Authority celebrates many successes and achievements each year. All of these are comprehensively detailed in the National Park Authority Best Value Performance Plan.

This paper highlights some of the achievements from the past 18 months in more detail than we were able to give in the self-assessment, giving a flavour of the breadth of work we are involved in.

Launch of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)

The Peak District was the first national park in Britain to launch new access rights for walkers under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, in September 2004.

Overnight, public right of access to the wild uplands more than doubled in the Peak District – from 249 sq km to 524 sq km, 37% of the National Park.

The National Park Authority is working in partnership with other rural agencies and landowners to ensure as smooth an introduction of the new rights as possible - appointing extra rangers, installing 400 new gates and stiles, and marking over 1200 points of access with signage from a simple 'roundel' to an A3 information panel.

The public have been involved through the Peak District Local Access Forum, especially those with a special interest in the new opportunities, such as the Ramblers' Association, as well as landowners from small-holders to national companies.



Vanessa Lawrence, Chief Executive of Ordnance Survey, at the launch event for CRoW Act 2000.

The event was launched on 19th September 2004, on moorland owned by United Utilities. Hundreds of guests, including ramblers, ethnically diverse youth groups, countryside organisations and disabled people, attended a televised launch event in the Goyt Valley.

Open access to the countryside has always been a priority for the Peak District National Park Authority, demonstrated in recent years by being the first National Park to reopen access following Foot and Mouth restrictions in 2001.

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Nationally important minerals cases

The Peak District has more quarries and mines than any other National Park – nearly 70.

Some have planning permission dating back to the 1950s, including Lees Cross and Endcliffe quarries on historic Stanton Moor, where eco-warriors have protested against their possible re-opening.

In June 2004 The Court of Appeal, following a previous two-day hearing in March, dismissed a claim that the National Park Authority had wrongly classified the long-unused Lees Cross and Endcliffe quarries as "dormant".

The decision means that the operators, Stancliffe Stone, cannot re-activate the quarries until modern environmental conditions have been imposed.



Quarrying at Longstone Edge

The issue attracted a lot of media attention due to the fact that the quarries are close to the villages of Stanton Lees and Stanton-in-the-Peak, where residents feared further disturbance from quarrying and increased lorry traffic. In addition, Stanton Moor contains prehistoric remains including the Nine Ladies stone circle. It is also an important wildlife haven and a popular spot for walkers.

Another site covered by a planning permission granted in the 1950s is Longstone Edge. The authority has currently taken enforcement action that is currently subject to appeal.

Planning and Development Control

The Authority's Development Control Service dealt with around 1,300 planning applications and notifications in 2004-05 – the second-highest caseload of any UK National Park.

It also received one of the best performances by a National Park Authority on speed of determination which resulted in a planning delivery grant of £124,000 to further help improve its services.

The National Park Authority's 'Pendleton' scores for electronic access to this service have increased from 12 (out of a possible 24) in 2004 to 15 in 2005. This survey's aim is to review the availability and accessibility of online planning information and

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services for Local and National Park Authority and County Council websites in England and Wales.

The additional points gained in 2005 for

- Details of appeals being available on line and access to Appeals via a link from our website to the Planning Portal
- Waste land and minerals plans are now available via our website.

The league table puts us in 3rd place behind Northumberland and North York Moors, and we are confident that when the next round of surveys takes place on 31st December 2005, we will gain our maximum 21 points through a combination of the Planning Portal, the implementation of a new document management system and the associated Public Access module, and integrating our online payments.



Stakeholder engagement event in May 2005

With the next National Park Management Plan due in 2006, and a new Local Development Framework to be published in 2007, the authority has instigated an exemplary programme of stakeholder engagement in the development of its long-term plans. This includes a programme of stakeholder and public meetings, as well as making full use of electronic media for consultations on the developing drafts.

Support to Peak Park Parishes

The National Park Authority works closely with all the local parishes through a number of media.

The Peak Park parishes' Forum is an association made up of 125 Parish Meetings, Parish Councils and Town Councils (also known as 'local councils') from all over the Peak District National Park.

It provides a forum where issues common to all local councils within the Peak District National Park can be aired and shared.

It promotes, liaises and assists the election of the Elected Parish Members to the Peak District National Park Authority and liaises with those eight Elected Parish Members.



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It particularly liaises with the Peak District National Park Authority and the other Local Authorities that cover the Peak District lobbying on behalf of local councils to represent their interests.

To ensure that the parishes are kept in touch with any developments, the authority produces a quarterly newsletter – Parishespeak – circulated to all the councils within the Parishes Forum.

The authority also hosts an annual Parishes Day, which gives all local parishes the chance to meet NPA members and officers, and raise and debate key issues.

Moors for the Future Partnership

Moors for the Future – an 11 partner project - was launched in 2002 with £4.7m funding, mainly from the Heritage Lottery, to restore rare moorland and blanket bog that was severely eroded by fire, pollution and overgrazing, to carry out research and to improve recreation opportunities and understanding.



Using helicopters to restore damaged moorland

One of the world's rarest habitats, the moors are also important for combating global warming. The project team are working with contractors using helicopters to re-seed and retain moisture.

It has delivered 16 projects, including restoring 3km² of eroded peat, 1.5km of eroded footpaths and completing the largest upland bird survey for 10 years.

It also began planning for a new base in Edale, to be called the Moorland Centre. The partnership consulted widely with Edale residents before finalising plans for the new Moorland Centre. Due to be open during 2006, it is intended as a research base as well as and information centre with community facilities.

A learning centre at Longshaw, (a National

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Trust estate) is also planned to provide educational facilities for schools and young people from the surrounding urban areas.

Improving the condition status of Sites of Special Scientific Interest

The Government has set a national target of 95% of SSSIs to be in favourable or recovering condition by 2010. 35% of the Peak District National Park has SSSI designation (54 sites, just over 50,000 hectares).

The Peak District National Park Authority owns nearly 5,000 hectares of SSSI. In December 2003 only 56% was considered in favourable condition. This has risen to 80% as a result of setting sheep grazing at a sustainable level and other conservation work, including ditch blocking and heather restoration on grass moor.

In the wider Peak District, the Peak District National Park Authority has been working with landowners, DEFRA's Rural Development Service (RDS) and English Nature to secure the conservation of the most important Peak District habitats such as upland heath and blanket bog. This has been through partnership projects such as Moors for the Future, which is restoring approximately 3km² of bare, and eroding blanket bog and a joint project with English Nature and RDS to negotiate sustainable moorland management plans with landowners.

We are the only UK National Park to hold the Council of Europe Diploma for landscape protection (Category 5). We were one of the 1st three protected areas to be awarded the diploma in 1966 and next year will be celebrating our 40th anniversary as a diploma holder. The award is reviewed every 5 years.

Losehill Hall – a Centre for Environmental Learning



Losehill Hall's biomass boiler

Losehill Hall achieved eco-centre status in 2003, and as part of the on-going programme of work to improve its environmental footprint installed a new £50,000 Biomass heating system using renewable energy from locally sourced woodchips. This is hoped to provide up to half the Centres heating and hot water needs and cut its CO₂ emissions by up to 50 per cent.

Working in partnership with Silvapower Ltd and the Working Woodlands Trust, a timber store and processing facility is being established near Losehill Hall which could be used by other organisations, thus building up a supporting infrastructure for the use of Biomass in this part of the Peak District.

Losehill Hall has also recently been awarded a Gold Award for Excellence in Tourism for the East Midlands. The 41-bedroom residential centre, with full

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conference facilities, a restaurant and bar, won this award for its approaches to customer care, accessibility and care for the environment to add to its three-diamond rating from the AA for its bed and breakfast accommodation.

Finally, to add to its collection of awards, the centre received a Highly Commended in the Sustainable Development category at the Business in the Community (BITC) Regional Awards for Excellence. This annual award aims to recognise 'the organisation that demonstrates positive environmental action, improves efficiency and contributes to a more sustainable society'.

New Peak District and Derbyshire Destination Management Partnership (DMP)

During 2005 the National Park Authority has had a leading role in establishing a new 'sub-regional' tourist board partnership (i.e. DMP) through negotiations with the Regional Development Agency, Derbyshire County Council, and other tourism partners. This will develop and support the work of the existing Visit Peak District partnership (a public and private sector initiative already set up and hosted by the National Park Authority) that has continued to raise the area's tourism profile, building on links formed to support the industry after the impact of foot-and-mouth disease in 2001. Visit Peak District markets the area, with a website, visitor guide, 'what's on' guides and attendance at key exhibitions. It also supports tourism businesses with conferences, training events and a newsletter/website service.

The website, www.visitpeakdistrict.com, attracted over 13 million hits during 2004 and the marketing campaigns generated additional visitor spending of £5.3 million in the wider Peak District in 2004/05.



Castleton Visitor Centre

The National Park Authority has also massively increased visitor usage of our Visitor Centres by targeted investments and improvements, with over half a million people using the service in the last 12 months. This has included the opening of a new £1m Castleton Visitor Centre in June 2004 providing a one-stop shop, that combines Castleton's Historical Society collection and exhibitions, with National Park interactive displays and publications, and a fully

networked Tourism Information Centre (TIC) Service for on-line accommodation booking (in partnership with the local authority). All Visitor Centres have been upgraded with an on-line tourism system networked to the TICs in the Peak District and beyond. They have also been piloting a 'distributed' call centre for handling national tourism enquiries about the Peak District. A further investment is being made (£900,000) in a new Moorland Centre at Edale as part of the Moors for the Future Project.

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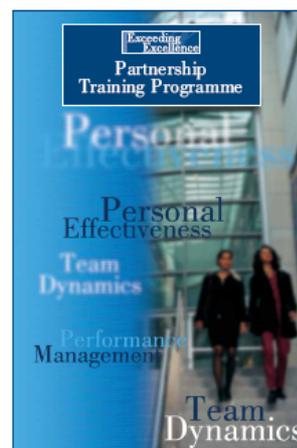
Performance Improvement Partnership

The Peak District became the first National Park Authority in the country to be awarded a Capacity Building Fund grant from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

This £350 000 improvement partnership that has secured an ODPM Capacity Building Grant to support 9 projects with Derbyshire County Council (DCC), Derbyshire Dales District Council (DDDC), High Peak Borough Council (HPBC), the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA), the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC). The partnership is coordinated by the PDNPA, This 1-year programme, needs to demonstrate good partnership working, innovation and build capacity of the individuals and organisations involved.

The programme has 4 key streams, with a number of projects within each of these. The key streams all reflect elements of the PDNPA's Performance Improvement Plan, as well as meeting the key objectives of all the partners involved.

Projects include a management development programme – Exceeding Excellence - for over 60 staff from the partnership, implementation of elements of the authority's Workforce Plan, identify possibilities for joint service delivery and a number of projects that look to improve the identity of and communication from the National Park.



Accredited programmes for vulnerable and cared for children



Young people from ARDIC Youth Group visiting the Peak District National Park

20 young people aged 15-16 qualified for the Peak District National Park Young Achievers Award, which they received at a ceremony on June 6, after learning conservation, countryside and first aid skills on residential courses among the hills. For many, it was their first opportunity to get out into the countryside and learn about wildlife habitats.

The scheme, which has been running for the past six months, involves groups of youngsters staying at a rural hostel for six days of intensive sessions, including

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long walks on wild terrain with Peak District National Park rangers and skills tuition with Countryside Volunteers.

To give them confidence for future independent visits, they learned how to find their way in the countryside and how to take care of someone ill or injured while out on the hills.

The Peak District National Park Authority and Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council youth service outreach team started the scheme to help close the gap between town and country. However, the scheme is now being developed for other authorities in and around the National Park initially with Derbyshire County Council.

Other young people from schools bordering the National Park have been enrolled as Youth Rangers – not only teaching them more about this special area, but also so that they could become ambassadors for the Park in their schools and communities.

These young people learn about navigation, conservation and survival skills, ecological surveying and tourism management.

Engaging the local community

The Peak District National Park Authority has organised 7 public meetings over the last year attended by over 600 members of the public, and has plans to host 4 more in the autumn.

The Authority launched a review of its policies and services with a series of village meetings throughout the National Park in June-July 2004.

Authority chair Tony Hams and chief executive Jim Dixon heard the public's views on major issues such as conservation, affordable housing, tourism, the local economy, sustaining rural services, transport and how its own performance could be improved.



PDNPA attending the Bakewell Show

Over the summer, the National Park Authority has attended four local agricultural shows around the Peak District providing displays about our work, activities for children and a chance for residents and visitors to add their thoughts to the Management Plan process.

Working in partnership with two local district councils whose boundaries meet in the middle

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of the Hope Valley, the authority is also coordinating a series of quarterly Forums on different issues of concern to the local communities.

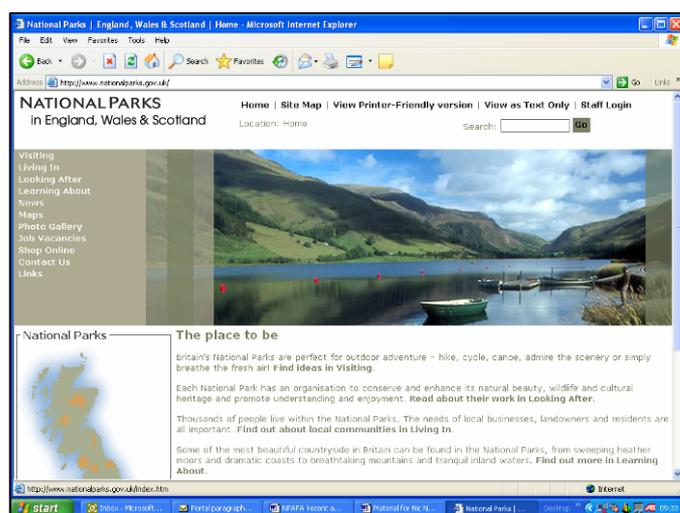
Residents are able to voice their views to councillors and staff from the Peak District National Park Authority, Derbyshire Dales District Council, High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council, along with Derbyshire Police.

The first of these forums held in June attracted nearly 200 members of the local community to discuss the issues related to off-road vehicle use. A further 3 forums are planned for the rest of 2005-06.

The Hope Valley is being used as a pilot scheme for joint Community Forums, aimed at opening a major channel of communication between residents and their local authorities, and between the authorities themselves, working in partnership.

National Park Portal (www.nationalparks.gov.uk)

The English National Park Authorities agreed to create a common web portal. The aim was to provide a single entry point for people seeking information about Britain's National Parks, allowing them to easily access data from one Park, or from many. All UK National Parks websites are accessible through the portal.



The portal was one of a number of IEG (Implementing Electronic Government) partnership projects funded from the English National Parks' IEG grants. Implementation was led by the Peak District National Park Authority on behalf of all National Park Authorities working through a joint project team representing different Parks with different skills, knowledge and experience. The project team were acutely aware that they were representing all the national parks and that the

portal would be the biggest joint project the NPAs have ever undertaken.

The project end report confirmed that the team had delivered against all objectives including:

- An easy access to information on issues and services common to all National Parks
- Links to other sites including ANPA
- An extranet to enable National Parks to communicate and share information electronically.
- A platform for developing a national park family brand and identity

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- A facility to enable NPAs to take payments for goods and services online.
- Shared content management system, hosted server and internet GIS

The Partnership has now moved into its next stage to ensure the future management, maintenance and development of the Portal. We have appointed a new Portal Manager, are drafting a formal Partnership Agreement and are encouraging new partners to join to improve the service to customers and to share funding. The PDNPA are continuing to provide finance and legal support to the partnership with the Lake District NPA taking on employer responsibilities for the Portal Manager. It will be a continuing challenge to work together and collectively fund the future associated revenue costs.

Improving communication and decision making within the Authority



Improved Customer Service Team

A new Customer Service Team was established in April 2004 which, along with better IT systems, has the aim of providing quicker, more responsive, high-quality and effective customer services, whether in person, on the phone or electronically

As well as improving communications and contact with our customers, the authority has been working to improve its internal communications. A series of 6 staff workshops took place in July, and were attended by over 140 staff allowing them to raise their concerns, and make suggestions and recommendations for the future direction

of the organisation.

The authority produces a popular staff e-zine on a monthly basis, and a members' e-zine every two months. Unfortunately, a small proportion of staff don't have access to email so were unable to receive these newsletters. This has been solved recently by introducing a new paper based publication – On the Frontline - for out-posted staff that don't have access to email.

To improve the decision-making processes, the Authority has introduced a more streamlined and responsive decision-making structure, reducing the number of committees and sub-committees from 10 to seven and increasing delegation to officers. To help raise the profile of key issues, a number of members were appointed as "champions" – including affordable housing, transport, regional partnerships, sport & recreation and cultural heritage.



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