

## **Peak District National Park Population Context**

1) The East Midlands Regional Plan replaces the former National Park Structure Plan as the primary strategic part of the new development plan system. It concentrates on the strategic need to meet national park purposes. In keeping with this, it does not envisage a need for the National Park to contribute in any strategic sense towards the anticipated need for housing to serve the regional or sub-regional population, of whatever level. Instead, it sets a framework for the National Park Authority to make local decisions about how best to foster social and economic well-being whilst meeting National Park Purposes and without compromising them. Both legislation and the Regional Plan make this strategic decision clear. The National Park Authority's role is to implement it.

2) Population considerations therefore flow from this basic prioritisation, instead of being a primary driver of policy. Community Strategies and other strategies for the local authorities covering parts of the National Park do not concern themselves with overall levels, but do include concerns about the vitality and balance of communities.

3) A National Park Management Plan was adopted in 2006 and established a vision and set of "strategic outcomes" for the National Park over the next 5 years. Part of that vision is for "a living, modern and innovative Peak District that contributes positively to vibrant communities for both residents and people in neighbouring urban areas, and demonstrates a high quality of life whilst conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the National Park."

4) The 1994 Structure Plan explained (Chapter 4: Housing) that policy was based on the national and regional context together with an understanding of local circumstances including population forecasts that had modelled a number of scenarios. The earlier submitted draft plan (the basis of discussion at the Examination in Public) had contained more explanation. It showed (paras 4.12 to 4.16) that under both the "locally generated" scenario (no in or out-migration) and one of recent migration trends, the population was expected to fall. Deaths exceeded births for the then foreseeable future; in-migration was both inevitable and useful, taking up what would otherwise be empty homes; and any additional new homes would help maintain the overall population level by enabling increased net in-migration.

5) Para 4.27 of the adopted Structure Plan stated that, "in order to achieve the best balance of the various Board objectives, overall house building should be planned at a level which will at least sustain the current population in the Park of about 38,000 people." This was thought to

offer sufficient reduction in the rate of new development to secure conservation, whilst avoiding any possibility that a smaller population would increase pressure to reduce services such as schools and shops. Estimates were made of:

- homes needed to meet the locally generated demand for affordable housing (using waiting list and housing authority advice)
- the rate of conversion of other existing buildings to homes
- new agricultural and other countryside workers' homes
- development that would be permitted because it enhanced the National Park

Added to the stock of unused planning permissions, the result was sufficient to maintain population stability. These guiding figures for different types of were “neither a target nor a limit.” They implied a significant slowing in the completion of newly-built homes in the National Park – another intention of the plan, since total housing stock had already increased by around 173 (1%) a year between 1986/87 and 1990/1991 inclusive (Source: ‘Factsheet 7 – Peak National Park: Number of Dwellings Built and Committed from 1977’ (Feb 1993). (NB The factsheet does not distinguish between residential dwellings and holiday units and the data on completions shown before 1985/86 is not available)

### **Recent Local Evidence**

6) The Structure Plan estimates for house building have been exceeded, as Fig 7 in the Annual Monitoring Report shows. This is partly because of unforeseen numbers of homes provided by conversion or justified by enhancement and, in particular, large mill conversions. Although strictly comparable information is not available for the National Park area between 1991 and 2001, the best evidence indicates that the number of people living in the National Park remained stable.

7) Initial public consultation on options for the future of the National Park (Help Shape the Future-2005 and Issues and Options-2007) did not look at population matters because the statistical work necessary to inform the discussion was not available. To remedy this and assist policy review at regional, sub-regional and local level, the National Park Authority commissioned new population projections for the period 2001 to 2026. The results have been shared with organisations operating in and around the National Park so that their views could inform this topic paper.

8) The projections are at: <http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/index/pubs/populationstats.htm> . They indicate that if recent trends continue:

- the National Park's population will decline unless the relatively high completion rate of new homes since 1991 is continued (around 95 new homes per year). That would require an increase in newly built homes, because past rates included a level of conversions that seems unlikely to be repeated now that the larger mill buildings have been renovated.
- the number of households will decline at a slower rate than the population, and may even increase, due to a decrease in average household size.
- residents will be increasingly elderly, with people aged over 60 years likely to make up at least 40% of the population in 2026. It is likely that more residents and visitors will have disabilities which are age related;
- the 'labour force' will decline, both in total and as a proportion of all people living in the National Park: by around 6,200 over the period. This will be accompanied by an increase in the dependency rate. Even if the housing completion rate was to be increased from 95 new homes per year to 150, a fall in the population of working age of around 1,900 looks likely.

9) Recently received ONS Mid-Year Estimates 2001-2005 do not give reason to question the projections. (NB The Mid-Year estimates for the National Park are non-standard National Statistics. The estimates for 2006 will be available in August 2008.) These key findings provide a basis for further discussion and choice as set out below.

### **The Relationships between Total Residents, Total Dwellings, and National Park Purposes.**

10) To provide better insight into likely changes, the projections looked at a range of scenarios including: census based projection (base population, fertility and mortality rates and migration data), natural change (as the Census based projection but excluding migration data), zero net migration ( as the Census based projection with the numbers of in-migrants the same as out migrants) and changes based on several dwelling completion rates up to 150 per year. These show that both natural population changes and recent trend produce a population decline. Because of smaller household size this does not imply empty homes. Indeed, in every scenario the number of households (and homes needed) increases. In particular the number of one person households is projected to increase by 44% between 2001 and 2026. The projections suggest that stability in total population would require the ongoing completion of around 90 new homes per year. Maintaining an increased completion rate of 150 per year would result in a population increase of around 10% by 2026.

11) In recent years the number of completed new dwellings has continued at a relatively high level despite the changed policy in the Structure Plan (at around 114 per year in the past 16 years, with residential dwellings running at around 95 per year - the rest being holiday units). However, the 'high' rate is thought to be because of:

- more conversions than anticipated and in particular several large mill conversions
- enhancement sites such as in Eyam
- the completion of Highfield, Bakewell.

Although there may still be some enhancement opportunities (in Bradwell or Bakewell for example) the number of such opportunities will decline as they are used during the next 10 to 20 years. Stripping these larger 'one-off' developments out of the figures reveals an underlying rate of completions of about 48 per year and this would be likely to result in a population reduction of around 6% between 2001 and 2026.

12) By 2026, the theoretical 'population stability rate' of around 90 new homes per year would add 2,250 to the 2001 stock of 17, 916 (ie around 13%). Since larger conversion opportunities have almost all been used, the majority of these will be newly built. The 1994 Structure Plan had sought to radically reduce the rate of completions seen during the 1980s because it implied doubling the number of homes in the National Park over the following 150 years or so. Continuing indefinitely with a rate of around 90 per year would provide an additional 13,500 homes over the next 150 years (a 75% increase on 2001). If such a route were chosen, it would represent only a small decrease on the pre 1994 Structure Plan rates and the number of homes in the National Park would double over about 200 years as opposed to 150 years from 1991 (the highest projected completion scenario of 150 per year would double the National Park's stock of homes in only around 120 years). Viewed in terms of handing down a conserved and enhanced National Park for the benefit of future generations, this would not seem to meet the overall aim of significantly limiting the amount of development in the National Park. It calls into question the rationale behind imposing any particular limit on new homes, since significant change would only be delayed as opposed to providing a stabilised situation with a genuinely low amount of development in the landscape. In the longer term this logic even applies to continuing the underlying rate of 48 new homes per year unchecked (an additional 1200 (7%) in the National Park over 25 years and 7,200 (45%) over 150 years). On the other hand, development of a few more significant 'enhancement sites' over the next decade should not prejudice the long term conservation vision provided that they are genuinely 'one-offs' driven by the enhancement need and do not set an expectation for more of the same ad-indefinitum.

### **Population Age Structure**

13) The population age structure in the National Park has long been skewed towards the older groups. The projections show this pattern continuing and intensifying as part of a bigger picture across the nation as a whole. (For evidence of the higher proportion of older people in rural areas see 'The State of the Countryside 2007' (Commission for Rural Communities). For regional projections, see "The East Midlands in 2006" (emda). The post war baby boom will increasingly make itself felt in the older age groups, with knock-on effects for housing, care services and the labour market. In the National Park, natural changes mean that the proportion of the population aged 60 and over is likely to rise. This will be intensified if migration patterns in 2000-2001 persist.

14) The projections show that in each scenario and each geographic area of the National Park the proportion of people aged over 60 will rise: on average from 25.8% (9,790) in 2001 to 40% in 2026 including increases in residents aged 75 and over from 9.2% (3,480) to 19% as a result of natural change. (Quote source of 2001 data as 2001 Census – Commissioned Tables – Crown Copyright). Migration further accentuates the 'natural change ageing' that is also found in both Derbyshire Dales and HighPeak outside the National Park. The pattern of migration indicated by the Census of Population, with a net surplus of younger adults leaving and older adults arriving, is a long-standing pattern that is likely to continue unless social trends change significantly.

15) In contrast, the 0 to 16 age group is projected to reduce in size. Natural change produces a fall from 18% of the population in 2001 to 15% by 2026. This is emphasised by the effects of migration with a net "loss" of families in the child-bearing groups. Current and even increased levels of dwelling completion still result in reduction to between 14% or 15%.

16) A broadly similar picture is anticipated for the parts of High Peak and Derbyshire Dales District outside the National Park. It appears that the additional skew towards older groups (an additional 8% or 1 in 12 people) relative to areas of Derbyshire Dales outside the National Park is something that will need to be accepted and dealt with by service providers. It is difficult to see how policy choices about rates of development could have a significant impact. Although the skew or bias appears slightly reduced in percentage terms in those projections with larger total populations, the actual number in each older group is increased - simply because the total population is larger. For this reason the difficulties faced by caring services dealing with a relatively dispersed rural population are not reduced if total population is increased as a consequence of choosing to permit additional newly built homes. This was acknowledged in the workshops that were held to disseminate the projection conclusions and consult on their implications.

17) It is not clear how an increased proportion of older residents will affect the National Park Management Plan's vision of a vibrant community. One might argue that there will be an imbalance that needs to be addressed by encouraging younger people to live in the area. On the other hand we have seen that this "imbalance" is made up of only 1 additional older person in every 12 when compared to Derbyshire Dales outside the National Park. If the stock of newly built affordable housing were to be increased by a large amount there may be an increased propensity for residents to be in the younger age groups, but it would not be possible to guarantee this via planning policy. However, an increased propensity for younger people to

occupy affordable housing would have more impact on the overall proportions of young and old if the affordable homes were created by buying back existing open market homes as turnover occurs rather than by building new additional stock. This is because each affordable home that is 'bought back' effectively displaces a home that is otherwise likely to accommodate older occupants. Using existing houses in villages in this way might also assist a better mix of social groups.

### **The Labour force**

18) A change associated with the increased proportion of elderly residents is a reduction in the labour force (residents aged 16 and over: in work or seeking work). If recent trends continue, the resident labour force is projected to decrease by some 35% from around 17,600 to around 11,400 between 2001 and 2026. In the Derbyshire Dales and High Peak areas of the National Park the decrease will be around 32%, and it will be more pronounced (around 58%) in the Staffordshire Moorlands. The direction of change is the same (with variation in degree) in all the projection scenarios explored. It is also evident outside the National Park, where the Population Projections for High Peak and Derbyshire Dales by Anglia Ruskin University and for The East Midlands by ONS show similar, but not quite such large changes.

19) At first sight, this trend seems to imply more need for people to commute or move into the National Park in order to take up existing employment. The National Park has long enjoyed close ties with surrounding areas. It may be the case that high growth rates in the adjoining conurbations (eg South Yorkshire) increase pressures for out-commuting. In 2001, around 51% of employed residents lived and worked in the National Park and the rest travelled outside to work (around 11,100 people). At the same time, around 6,800 people travelled from outside to occupy jobs within it (estimates by DTZ using 2001 Census data). In practice, however, the number of self-employed people in the National Park is already high (18% in 2001 compared with 7.7% in the East Midlands and 8.3% in England as a whole). One possibility, therefore, is of a balancing trend in reducing numbers of jobs in self-employed sectors as individuals age and become reliant on retirement incomes. With complexities such as this, the impact of a reduction in people of working age on the local service economy is difficult to predict and must remain somewhat speculative. It is not necessarily harmful or problematic: for example, some incoming retirees may have more disposable income than current resident workers.

20) As with the issues surrounding a more elderly population, it can be seen that in the context of National Park purposes, any difficulties that might arise from this social change are not easily removed simply by altering house-building rates. Once again, securing new affordable homes by buying into the existing total stock as it "turns over" would probably have more impact on labour force considerations than building additional new homes. Perhaps most significantly, the projections in the model do not take account of any future shift in the general expectation of society and law about the age at which people might or should retire.

## Consequences

21) The forgoing discussion shows that a changing population structure is anticipated, irrespective of total numbers. There will be more residents that are elderly and fewer of working age. There will be more small households (single person in particular).

22) This scenario reflects national changes and is not unique to the National Park. Market choices in the movements of people into and out of the Park make the changes more intense. They are, however, evident to almost the same degree in Derbyshire Dales outside the National Park. Within it, the changes are predicted to be most evident in the Staffordshire Moorlands, and least in the High Peak.

23) The population projections make it clear that increasing the completion rate of newly built homes will not in itself remove the difficulties that may accompany the anticipated changes in population structure. In particular the numbers of older residents and any consequent difficulties for the caring services is predicted to increase as total population increase, even though the proportion in the older age groups is reduced.

24) On the other hand, the number of households and their “need” for housing increases in all of the projected scenarios. In these circumstances, it is easy to see that maintaining a significant increase in building new homes would soon contradict the current strategy which seeks to slow down rates of development and to hand on the current character of the National 25) Park for the enjoyment of future generations. Increasing household and population totals also result in more demand for infrastructure and more impact within the National Park from the need to make journeys and dispose of locally generated waste.

26) Increasing the stock of affordable homes by buying back from the open market as it “turns over” seems more likely to counter some of the changes in population structure than building additional new stock. Even so, there may still be opportunities to link new development to statutory conservation and enhancement purposes in some parts of the National Park.

27) The following table helps summarise matters by putting the range of considerations into 4 scenarios. The fourth scenario is a composite based on the logical outcome of compliance with the logic and strategy of the East midlands Regional Plan:

SCENARIO	ANTICIPATED CONSEQUENCES in NATIONAL PARK
1)  The “underlying” rate of 48 additional homes per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population reduces by 6% between 2001 and 2026.</li> <li>• Impact on social and economic vitality is uncertain.</li> <li>• The labour force decreases and number in older age groups</li> </ul>

<p>continues.</p>	<p>increase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on social and economic vitality is uncertain.</li> <li>• Number of newly built homes increases because conversions become rarer.</li> <li>• Number of homes in the National Park increases by around 1200 (7%) in 25 years and 7,200 (45%) over 150 years if this rate were to be maintained.</li> <li>• Some more demand for infrastructure and impact within the National Park from the need to make journeys.</li> <li>• Likely to be accommodated without major harm to the landscape and other valued characteristics.</li> <li>• In conformity with the East Midlands Regional Plan.</li> </ul>
<p>2)  About 90 additional homes per year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of households increases as household size decreases, but population remains stable.</li> <li>• The labour force decreases and number in older age groups increases.</li> <li>• Impact on social and economic vitality is uncertain.</li> <li>• Number of newly built homes increases because conversions become rarer.</li> <li>• Number of homes in the National Park increases by 2250 (13%) in 25 years and doubles in 200 years if this rate were to be maintained.</li> <li>• Some more demand for infrastructure and impact within the National Park from the need to make journeys.</li> <li>• More difficult to accommodate without harm to the landscape and other valued characteristics.</li> <li>• More difficult to find conformity with the East Midlands Regional Plan.</li> </ul>

<p>3)</p> <p>Increase completion rate to 150 new homes per year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both population and number of households increase, population by 10% in 25 years to 2026.</li> <li>• Even so, the labour force decreases and the number in older age groups increases (by more than other scenarios in absolute terms).</li> <li>• Impact on social and economic vitality is uncertain.</li> <li>• Number of newly built homes increases because conversions become rarer).</li> <li>• Number of homes in the National Park increases by 3750 (21%) in 25 years and doubles in 120 years if this rate were to be maintained.</li> <li>• More demand for infrastructure and more impact within the National Park from the need to make journeys and dispose of locally generated waste.</li> <li>• Even more difficult to accommodate without harm to the landscape and other valued characteristics.</li> <li>• Even more difficult to find conformity with the East Midlands Regional Plan.</li> </ul>
<p>4)</p> <p>Population and housing completions regarded as an outcome of action to achieve Purposes and Duty rather than an objectives or targets in themselves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the shorter term (10 to 15 yrs) identifying and developing sites justified by the need to enhance the National Park could produce locally significant numbers of new homes.</li> <li>• Otherwise, begin to slow down the rate of new-build in order to emphasise conservation of the landscape / village relationship. Ensuring nevertheless that identified shortages of affordable housing continue to be addressed.</li> <li>• In the medium and longer term, switch the emphasis for providing affordable homes from new-build to buying into the existing stock.</li> <li>• Total population reduces in the medium to longer term</li> <li>• The labour force decreases and number in older age groups increase.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Impact on social and economic vitality is uncertain.</li><li>• Most able to accommodate without harm to the landscape and other valued characteristics.</li><li>• Most able to find conformity with the East Midlands Regional Plan.</li></ul>
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28) There is little or nothing in the way of evidence to assist a sound conclusion favouring either population growth or decline, given the relatively small totals that would be involved and even less to say that this should be a particular given figure. Is Northumberland National Park, for example, less sustainable than the Peak District because it has a lower population? This is particularly the case given that the Regional Plan does not expect the National Park to play a key part in housing the region's population. In the absence of clear evidence and with many different views on the sustainability / vitality or otherwise of small rural populations, it seems logical to put that question to one side and concentrate instead on statutory National Park purposes (option 4). The duty of well-being can then be applied to whatever the outcome is in terms of population, rather than setting a population objective as a priority that drives other considerations. This option is most in keeping with developing Regional Policy for the National Park which concentrates on a spatial strategy to help achieve National Park purposes and does not attach higher priority to other regional or sub-regional objectives (Policy 9 and paragraph 3.1.4 of the 2006 draft replacement Regional Plan).