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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Working Party on flora, fauna and landscapes

EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

ON-THE-SPOT APPRAISAL OF THE PEAK
DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK (United Kingdom)

Report by Mr. L.E. Esping

20.397
03.3/58.1

The European Diploma was awarded to the Peak District National Park (area of outstanding national beauty) on 29 March 1966 for the five year period expiring on 28 March 1971. In accordance with the procedure proposed by the Committee of Ministers, an on-the-spot appraisal of this protected landscape was decided upon so as to ascertain whether the conditions prevailing at the time of the award have been maintained or improved.

The Secretary General entrusted this task to Mr. L.E. Esping (Sweden), who visited the area on 5 and 6 October 1970. Mr. Esping was accompanied by Mr. H. Köpp, of the Secretariat.

1. Terms of reference

Following a proposal by the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources during its ninth session, the Secretary General nominated me to carry out an on-the-spot appraisal of the Peak District National Park (United Kingdom) with a view to deciding on the renewal of the period of validity of the European Diploma awarded to the Park in 1966. I was instructed to make an expert appraisal of the following points:

- to investigate the present situation of the Park and
- to see if the conditions existing at the time of the award have been maintained or improved.

I believe these will include an investigation of the Park's European interest and importance in general and its adequate protection, management and maintenance in particular. Preparations were based on the annual reports submitted to the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources by the Peak Park Planning Board, the body responsible for the Park, and on the publications produced by this body during the period since 1966, especially its annual reports.

The on-the-spot appraisal was carried out on 5 and 6 October 1970, in the company of Dr. H. Köpp of the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the Council of Europe.

Much time was spent on discussions with members of the Peak Park Planning Board, the authority responsible for the Park area, its executive staff, field officers and scientists from the Nature Conservancy and universities, because both Dr. Köpp and I know the Park well, its localities and problems, from previous visits.

2. Peak District National Park

2.1 National and European interest

Apart from its scientific, historic and scenic values, which will be dealt with separately, the main justification for the Park as a protected landscape is that, in spite of relatively heavy human settlement since prehistoric times, it retains large areas of uncultivated (though not natural) moorlands, woods, scrub and open country, which are essential as recreational zones for a population of some 16 to 17 million people living within 60 miles of the Park's borders (the largest concentration of people in the industrial region of the English Midlands). The resultant pressures on a limited

area of countryside are unique in Europe. The Park's consequent vulnerability and the sophisticated management and control schemes to deal with this can serve as an outstanding example for other regions in Europe, which may soon face similar problems. The Peak District is being used as a large resource for day visitors, less so for over-night stays and hardly at all as a holiday region. Thus most attention is given to serving the needs of day visitors. Parking spaces, a variety of outdoor sports and recreation facilities are given priority. At the same time, information and interpretation work on conservation, a better understanding of nature and its resources are showing encouraging results. It is neither the scientific value of the Park area (although several scientifically interesting features are found locally) nor its scenic beauty, but the methods used to manage the Park for millions of people: how to resist development pressures; how to work out compromises to meet many different and contradictory demands; how to improve the existing resources - which attract specialists and visitors from all parts of the British Isles and even from abroad to the Peak District National Park.

2.2 Staff, budget etc.

A short presentation of the development of the Park's staff, budget etc. will give a general idea of the important and grave efforts the Board and other bodies are doing to tackle the growing problems to maintain and manage the Peak District National Park for millions of visitors - about 5 millions a year.

2.2.1 Budget: The Peak Park's Planning Board yearly revenue accounts show an increase in expenditures and incomes from £94,343 for 1964-65 to £175,521 for 1969-70.

2.2.2 Staff etc.: Technical and administrative staff have risen from 40 to 45. The warden service from 3 full-time wardens to 5 and the part-time wardens from 80 to 102. 1967 there were 2 full-time information officers and 14 part-time assistants. 1969 there were 4 + 17 officers and assistants.

It seems the Peak Park's budgeting and staffing conditions etc. are far better in relation to other parks or reserves than perhaps in any other part of Europe.

2.3 Long-term planning and management

Long-term planning policy and management is based on the "Peak District National Park development plan, report and analysis of survey" published in 1955 (119 pp) and re-issued in 1966 (124 pp). Both detailed and very valuable documents show the developments in planning and management policy, which can broadly be divided into three phases since the establishment of the Park in 1950.

- (i) The successful (but merely passive) attempt to keep development away from the Park area;
- (ii) The establishing of active control and supervisory schemes, creating recreation and leisure facilities and introducing information and interpretative services;
- (iii) The building up of suitable management principles for the existing schemes and resources and the strengthening of information and interpretative services.

During the development mentioned above, the structure of the Board's committees has also been appropriately altered. Detailed information can be found in the last annual report (for 1969-70) of the Board, prepared for the British Government.

2.4 Leisure and recreation planning

As already mentioned, the main emphasis is laid on outdoor recreation for day visitors (compare what is said concerning the information service and warden service above). New schemes, some of which are given below, have been introduced or are being tried out.

2.4.1 The Goyt Valley experiment, for which a publicity leaflet has been produced: the experiment is an exercise in managing the countryside for multiple purpose use: motoring, cycling, walking, farming, game-keeping and forestry. A motor free zone has been established to enable visitors to enjoy the surroundings without disturbance by traffic. The experiment was organised and financed by the Countryside Commission and is the first of its kind to be launched under the new powers contained in the Countryside Act of 1968. Results will show whether similar schemes can be introduced elsewhere.

2.4.2 The Tissington trail - a disused railway line is being acquired and converted into a public footpath.

2.4.3 Public access, large scale acquisition and shooting. The provision of public access to the moors is one of the most important factors for the Park. This is arranged by agreements made with the landowners or - even better - by the acquisition of land by the Board or other public bodies. A further 12,000 acres (5,000 ha) have recently been opened to public access.

By 1966, sportsmen were concerned that the number of grouse (Lagopus Lagopus) shot had declined, and they wanted to know if this deterioration was due to public access. In collaboration with the Nature Conservancy a three-year investigation was made. Grouse showed no evidence of a decline associated with public access agreements. Counts on two busy Sundays in July and August showed that only 5% of visitors strayed from the main paths despite access agreements (N. Picozzi, Nature Conservancy).

2.4.4 Apart from existing camping and caravan sites, hostels and private hotel and catering facilities, there has been a serious shortage of accommodation. A Field Study Centre with sixty beds is being planned, to serve for school and adult education courses on conservation problems. It is hoped that links with education authorities can thus be strengthened and that the information and interpretative services will enable the general public to gain a better understanding of the countryside. Well-designed booklets on nature trails are sold in the information centres and local bookshops.

2.4.5 Planning applications etc. In spite of serious efforts to make better use of existing resources, it can already be seen that the pressure of five million visitors per year may prove too much for the present and future ecological capacity of the Park. This is apart from local demands by industry, farming and housing - about 800 planning applications are generally received every year, most of them for building purposes.

Table 1

Year	applications	permissions	refused
1965-66	725	127 + 453	96
1966-67	817	195 + 688	120
1967-68	835	98 + 512	97
1968-69	834	142 + 529	94
1969-70	744	60 + 505	85

For more details compare Table 2, Appendix 1 (from the eighteenth annual report of the Planning Board 1969-70).

New ideas are being discussed with a view to creating country parks within the Park limits or near by, so as to concentrate certain activities within a specified area and relieve pressure on more vulnerable parts of the Park. Another project - so-called "regional parks" - is also being

discussed by the local authorities of Nottingham and Derby, who are represented on the Peak Park Planning Board. It is intended that these areas be made into "green belts" with some recreation facilities. However, there are no special legal provisions for this, apart from general planning legislation.

2.4.6 A special problem is that of the water reservoirs.

Day-to-day pressures have increased in recent years. One of the main factors which influence the landscape is the problem of water reservoirs.

At present there are 56 reservoirs over 4 acres (1.6 ha). This means that many of the Park's upland gritstone and shale valleys contain water reservoirs. Three new ones have been built in 1969 and a fourth is on its way.

No less than ten possible reservoir sites have been under consideration during 1969-70.

The construction of a reservoir has an effect on many factors including scenery, agricultural land-use, ecology and public access. As is said in the Board's annual report for 1969-70: "The scenery of the Peak District is of a special kind, ranging from intimate dales to open moorland and pastoral shale valleys; it is not always the kind associated with large areas of water, and the man-made quality of a reservoir could look incongruous in many locations". From this point of view there is a need to accelerate research into alternative methods of water supply. It is especially valuable that the Board has made a study "Feasibility of securing water resources other than by the creation of storage reservoirs". The report will soon be published.

2.4.7 Conclusions: It can be seen that another approach to national parks is developing since the Countryside Act of 1968 was passed. National parks in the United Kingdom are neither open-air museums nor wilderness areas but carefully planned and managed regions which, especially in the case of the Peak District, serve as large recreation zones and offer leisure facilities without upsetting the ecological balance of the countryside. This reasoning brings them closer to continental nature parks or recreational areas rather than other national parks in, for example the United States, Switzerland or Sweden.

2.5 Scientific interest and research

Much more research is needed into the influence of the rapidly growing pressures in the countryside on wildlife and vegetation and on environmental interrelations. In fact, the Nature Conservancy, universities and private naturalists' organisations are involved in several research projects of this kind, supported by the Peak Park authorities.

A national nature reserve within the Park boundaries (awaiting official approval) offers unique possibilities for assessing human influence on vegetation. The results may be of great importance to other parks and will be published shortly.

Examples of other research projects are:

"Breeding performance and shooting bags of red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*) in relation to public access in the PDNP" - compare 2.4.3,

"The relative importance for wildlife conservation of seven potential reservoir sites in the PDNP and Derbyshire",

"The ecological significance of fire in limestone grassland communities of the Derbyshire dales".

In the past, reservoirs were considered prohibited zones and unsuitable for recreational use. With improved techniques of drinking water purification, limited recreational use (sailing, for instance) has been introduced. No final studies have been made as yet, but it is believed that this kind of strictly controlled open air recreation will have no effect on the water catchment systems.

There are also several sites of special scientific interest in the Park (a reference map will be sent to the Secretariat).

A study on the historical importance of lead mining in the Peak District was published two years ago.

Woodland management and landscaping achievements are summarised in two recent publications of the Peak Park Planning Board - "Our heritage of trees" and a popular leaflet "Woodlands in the landscape". The present area under trees is very limited and most woodlands are extremely small. This may well change with a possible change in agricultural policy and thus alter the existing landscape considerably - perhaps even more than the reservoirs. The question of possible afforestation plans was discussed. This may not be incompatible with one of the Park authorities' two main duties, which are to conserve the natural beauty of the area, because more trees could have a positive rather than a negative influence on the scenery, and "provide and promote facilities for the enjoyment of the national park".

2.6 Measures for protection and development control

The measures for protection laid down in the general legislation, as well as in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, have not been changed by the new Countryside Act 1968 (England and Wales). Development control however, had to be strengthened because of the growing number of planning applications - compare 2.4.5. Here the national park authorities have established rules and regulations which have a positive effect on, for instance, the siting and shape of buildings, the choice of material and colour. The Peak District could serve as a very good example on careful planning and management. The standard of building, etc. can be seen in a publication, produced by the national park authorities "Building in the Peak District".

The boundaries of the national Park have not been altered since the award of the Diploma. The population figures are fairly stable, although a slight change in the social and age structure can be seen.

Some general information can be obtained from a popular publication produced during ECY 1970: "The Peak - the story of a national Park". Detailed data on accounts, estimates of income and expenditure, forecasts and specific projects have been prepared and supplied for the on-the-spot appraisal by the Park authorities.

3. Conclusions

3.1 The main justification for the Park as a "protected landscape" is not its scientific and historic value or its scenic beauty, but its importance as a recreational zone in the industrial region of the English Midlands. Its European interest in this field should be noted and its experience in long-term planning and management and leisure and recreation planning, its achievements and drawbacks will be extremely useful for other regions in Europe. It is also here that research results and projects, some of which are listed (2.5), are urgently needed and highly interesting for other parks in Britain and Europe. There is no doubt that the Peak District National Park has the most effective planning and executive machinery of all British parks (2.2 and 2.6); its budgeting and staffing conditions, etc. are far better in relation to other parks - perhaps unique in Europe (2.2) - but the term "national park" can from an international point of view be misleading. The changing concept comes close to continental nature parks or recreational areas, which are also protected landscapes for out-door life purposes.

3.2 Renewal: On my on-the-spot investigation of the Peak District National Park I have found,

that the present situation of the Peak Park is good also in comparison with the conditions existing at the time of the award and

that the authorities have both improved and well maintained the area. I therefore propose a renewal of the validity of the European Diploma awarded to the Park in 1966.

3.3 Proposal: Ref. to the discussion under 3.1, concerning the use of the term National Park, there are some conflicts with what is laid down in the European Diploma (especially if other applications come up in this category) and it may be suggested that the terms of reference of the Diploma will have to be discussed and possibly revised in the near future in order to pay tribute to the outstanding importance of keeping unspoilt, though managed, countryside as protected landscapes for recreational purposes and not only because of their scientific, historic and scenic values.