

European Diploma for Protected Areas

Peak District National Park, United Kingdom: Annual report for the year 2020-21

Annual reports should describe the changes that have taken place since the previous year in dynamic terms of management and function and not be limited to basic data. Any new text or map introducing a change in the situation of the area should be attached to the annual report.

State: United Kingdom of Great Britain

Name of the area: Peak District National Park

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas:

Awarded 1966, Renewed 2011 (10 years ago)

Central authority concerned:

Name: Peak District National Park Authority

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Authority responsible for its management:

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1. Conditions: List here all conditions which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the conditions have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the conditions. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. Complete the review of the national park management plan and continue implementation of the plans and strategies it contains.

Implementation of the National Park Management Plan 2018-23 delivery plan continues, with the Annual Monitoring Report being agreed in May 2021. Please see at: [Annual Monitoring Report 2020-21 \(peakdistrict.gov.uk\)](https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/annual-monitoring-report-2020-21)

We have started to review the Management Plan with partners to develop the 2023-28 vision, aims, objectives and targets. We are seeking to adopt the new plan in September 2022, with implementation beginning in April 2023.

Work commenced to review the Peak District Landscape Strategy & European Landscape Convention Action Plan, first published in 2009 (please see [Peak District Landscape Strategy & Action Plan](https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/peak-district-landscape-strategy-action-plan)). This document is used routinely by National Park Authority staff when dealing with planning applications and other land management consultations.

A Wooded Landscapes Plan was drafted in consultation with partners (and was subsequently adopted in January 2022), providing guidance on appropriate options for increasing tree, shrub and woodland cover in different landscape types within the National Park. Please see <https://democracy.peakdistrict.gov.uk/documents/s45197/Appendix%201%20-%20Draft%20Wooded%20Landscapes%20Plan.pdf>

National Park staff worked with National Parks England to produce a Nature Recovery Prospectus for the Peak District- please see [Appendix 1 - PDNP Nature Recovery Prospectus.pdf \(peakdistrict.gov.uk\)](https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/appendix-1-pdnp-nature-recovery-prospectus.pdf).

2. Recommendations: List here all recommendations which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the recommendations have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the recommendations. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. secure and enhance the management of existing important key conservation habitats in farmland, especially hay meadows, wetlands, limestone dales and remaining areas of lead mine rakes, particularly through advice and brokerage of agri-environment schemes in conjunction with appropriate partner organisations;

The Authority's Farm Liaison Team has continued to support and encourage landowners in applying for agri-environment schemes. In July, the government-funded Farming in Protected Landscapes programme was launched to support farmers and landowners in National Parks to transition to a new agricultural support system following Brexit, based on payment for delivery of public goods. The Authority is leading delivery of this programme in the Peak District, which will help landowners deliver projects that support nature recovery, cultural heritage, landscape, climate change mitigation and sustainable farm businesses- please see [FiPL newsletter digital.pdf \(peakdistrict.gov.uk\)](https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/fiPL-newsletter-digital.pdf). To date 59 applications have been approved.

The Authority-led South West Peak Landscape Partnership (SWPLP) completed restoration works on 8.25ha of hay meadow to increase species diversity; began an ambitious project with Aberystwyth University surveying eDNA in soils on 26 different farms (c.120ha) for grassland fungi of indicative of sites of national/international importance; and carried out tree and hedge planting, riparian fencing and in-channel woody debris to improve water quality and reduce downstream flooding.

We have been assessing our previous methodology for lead rake survey, and designing a review of the survival of lead rakes, to assess the ongoing threat from agricultural intensification, as part of landscape monitoring.

We continue to play a strong advocacy role at a national level, to influence the design of current and future land management schemes and policy. In 2021, this included leading two projects in the White Peak to influence the development of the Environmental Land Management Scheme- the national agricultural support scheme being developed following Brexit. The White Peak Tests work involved working with landowners to trial how Landscape Character descriptions could be used to tailor the national scheme to local

circumstances to ensure it delivers environmental outcomes appropriate to the local area. The White Peak Trials project trialled ways of integrating biodiversity enhancement into more intensively managed agricultural landscapes, including the provision of field margins, herbal leys and increasing sward diversity in productive grassland.

2. Halt and reverse the past degradation of heather moorland and blanket bog through moorland management plans, agri-environment schemes and with help from the Moors for the Future Partnership;

During 2020/21 the Moors for the Future Partnership delivered £5 million (€6 million) worth of moorland restoration works, including stabilization of 30 hectares of bare peat through re-vegetation; installation of 10,000 dams and gully blocks to raise the water table in the peat and slow erosion of blanket bog; planting of 1,000 sphagnum moss plugs; and restoration of 1.25 km of moorland footpaths. In addition, 211 long-term quadrats and 600 dip wells were monitored for vegetation and water table changes, and there were public engagement activities with over 13,000 people. Since 2003, the partnership has invested £45 million (€54 million) restoring 34 km² of bare peat, installing 46,000 gully blocks, planting 4.6 million *Sphagnum* plugs by hand and creating 3 km² of native clough woodland. This work has avoided the loss of an estimated 62,000 tonnes of carbon per year.

The Authority has supported the development of a model to predict moorland wildfire occurrence and behavior, led by private moorland owners and drawing on international experience, in order to plan a strategic approach to wildfire prevention and mitigation across the Peak District moors.

3. Step up measures to address the decline in breeding populations of priority bird species, particularly lapwing, curlew and snipe on farmland;

The South West Peak Landscape Partnership produced 15 wader plans to provide advice on land management for curlew, lapwing and snipe. A PhD entitled 'Wading Birds in the UK Uplands: Threats and Conservation Interventions' was completed and two peer-reviewed papers published open access (please see [Upland rush management advocated by agri-environment schemes increases predation of artificial wader nests \(wiley.com\)](#)).

Birds of prey continue to have mixed fortunes in the Peak District. Highlights included the second year of Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*) successfully breeding, and a pair of Hen Harriers (*Circus cyaneus*) breeding successfully for 3 of the last 4 years, indicating the potential for their return to the Peak District. There were two confirmed persecution incidents- significantly fewer than in 2020.

4. Negotiate agreements to secure appropriate management of ancient and semi-natural woodland sites;

We now have an Ash Dieback Plan in place to describe how we will address this significant issue on our own property. We have secured funding from the Local Authority Treescapes Fund, as part of a collaborative partnership with Derbyshire County Council and others. This has allowed us to replace some diseased ash trees on our own properties.

5. Implement with partners programmes to achieve the targets and objectives set out in the Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011-2020;

See Recommendations 1-4. In 2021, work commenced to develop a Nature Recovery Strategy with partners, as a successor to the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

6. Maintain at least 95% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) land in favourable or recovering condition on land owned by the National Park Authority; in addition, implement measures on authority-owned land to maximise its contribution to nature conservation and cultural heritage objectives;

By November 2021 95.5% of SSSI land within the National Park was in Favourable or Recovering condition (16% Favourable, 79.5% Recovering).

7. Carry out conservation and community work at a landscape scale through an integrated area-based management approach;

The South West Peak Landscape Partnership carried out community involvement in excavation and consolidation of 19th century limekiln (which will now be adopted by the local scouts group); historic building

recording of isolated field barns; hay meadow survey and restoration; hedge and tree planting; replacement of stiles with wicket gates to aid access; design and implementation of 'Buxton Wild Week' community and school awareness and action for conservation.

The Stange and North Lees Heritage Action Group has now conducted its first field surveys with community volunteers (the timetable was adversely impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic).

The GUIDeline cultural arts project has delivered a number of community events, celebrating engagement with the boundary of National Park in its 70th anniversary year.

8. Implement the Cultural Heritage Strategy for the national park and continue to work with partner organisations, local communities and English Heritage to achieve targets;

The Authority continues to implement its Cultural Heritage Strategy through its external partnerships and community focussed work, statutory planning work and encouraging landowners to take up options for Cultural Heritage within agri-environment schemes and the new Farming in Protected Landscapes programme

We are working with the National Trust, on their portfolio of farmsteads, to consider the potential for adaptive reuse of redundant agricultural buildings.

Collaborative partnerships with external organisations continue. We have been working with the Universities of Sheffield and Manchester, and Western Park Museum in Sheffield, to celebrate the 200th year anniversary of antiquarian Thomas Bateman. We raised funds to help the parish of Middleton-by-Youlgrave to make repairs to Bateman's Tomb (a Grade II listed building). Through collaboration, the University of Sheffield has surveyed Haddon deserted medieval site (scheduled monument) and a Romano-British field system at Chee Tor. We continue to Chair the Ecton Mines Partnership, and our focus this year has been planning for a project to repair the 'balance cone' and get the monument removed from the national Heritage at Risk list.

We are supporting a PhD investigation into Historic Landscape Characterisation and embedded social values (University of York).

We delivered our first ever on-line Derbyshire Archaeology Day, due to Covid restrictions. Numbers were in excess of 400 attendees at each of two half-day sessions.

A programme of traditional barn restoration continued, using national grant schemes to restore traditional stone field barns, which are a characteristic feature of the National Park. Restoration incorporated measures for bats and barn owls, which have proven successful.

9. Continue to provide encouragement to small-scale economic schemes linking conservation of the environment of the Peak District to economic benefit;

The Peak District National Park Authority continues to award businesses the Peak District Environmental Quality Mark – an environmental accreditation scheme that recognises and rewards positive sustainability practices. Participating businesses trade locally to support the local economy; reduce their global environmental impact; protect and enhance their local environment; invest in people and communities; and celebrate the special qualities of the Peak District. Organisations that successfully achieve the Environmental Quality Mark are honoured by an awards ceremony and get use of the award logo, which differentiates their products and services, making them stand out as an environmentally responsible option.

The Authority continues to support local landowners and managers in applying for agri-environment scheme and other financial measures to deliver national park objectives.

10. Only authorise extensions of existing mineral quarries to meet essential national needs, for example, if the minerals are not available elsewhere or are needed to provide traditional building materials in the park; seek restoration of mineral quarries to enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the national park;

All mineral sites within the National Park are now worked under a modern scheme of planning conditions. The number of active mineral working sites in the national park has reduced significantly over the last 30 years from 141 to 33 and many of those 33 are now in a final restoration phase or, having been restored, are in a period of prescriptive aftercare to bring the site to a beneficial after-use. Most restoration ecologically led, designed to achieve net gains by helping the National Park achieve biodiversity targets in the biodiversity action plan. A good example of this is the progressive restoration of the limestone and shale quarries at Hope Cement works. The progressive restorations has allowed for the establishment of valuable habitat while the

site continues to operate, providing an immediate biodiversity gain whilst working towards the final restoration of the sites.

11. Continue to develop tourism activities in a way that protects and enhances both the interests of the community and the environment and supports the local economy; ensure that the National Park Authority meets the requirements of an application for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism; increase the proportion of visitors using sustainable methods of travel.

The Peak District National Park is one of the most popular destinations for visits, and in particular day visits, in the United Kingdom. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019, there were 14.9 million visits to the National Park lasting three hours or more. It is likely that there were an almost equal number of visits lasting less than three hours. The majority of visitors to the Peak District National Park (83%) arrived by private car prior to the pandemic. Public transport patronage levels have fallen as a result of the pandemic, with some former passengers reluctant to use buses because of safety concerns.

The Peak District National Park works closely with Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire (MPDD) our tourist board for the area. We are supporting them with the ambitious recovery plan with the MPDD Vision, '*Our mission is to develop and grow a successful and sustainable tourism economy, working closely with a range of partners to make the Peak District and Derbyshire the destination of choice, regionally, nationally and globally*'. We work with them to support campaigns such as 'Time to enjoy the great outdoors' that promoted sustainable tourism and staycations as lockdown eased.

We continue to promote responsible visiting with our partners through our #PeakDistrictProud campaign.

Peak District National Park Authority have been in discussion with Defra and the Department for Transport with regard to the Glover report proposal 19 being widened out to include the Peak District National Park as a pilot area. The Peak District's predominant popularity as a day visit destination makes it a different but equally valid pilot area for Proposal 19. To support this and our ongoing work around recreation hubs we are currently developing a sustainable transport programme with the ultimate aim being delivery of modal shift for visitors to the Peak District National Park. If achieved, this has the potential to deliver a range of benefits to all partners.

We have delivered new heritage-focussed public walks with the Ranger team.

3. Site Management: List here any changes to the European Diploma holding site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

In order to accommodate a reduction in our core budget whilst protecting front-line services, the four Director posts were cut in 2021 and the management structure adjusted so that Service Managers now report directly to the Chief Executive.

4. Boundaries: Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma holding site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

No boundary changes.

5. Other information: List here any other information about the European Diploma holding site which you consider should be provided to the Council of Europe.

No further information.

11. Influence of the award of the European Diploma for Protected Areas

The conditions and recommendations of the Diploma renewal are integrated into the National Park Management Plan and other corporate planning documents, which guide the Authority's work. The Authority continues to highlight the importance of the Diploma by including the logo

Holder of Council of Europe Diploma



on all letters.