



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

European Diploma for Protected Areas

Peak District National Park, United Kingdom: Annual report for the year 2024-25

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 2024 (1 year ago)

Central authority concerned:

Name: Peak District National Park Authority

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Authority responsible for its management:

Peak District National Park Authority- details as above.

1. Conditions:

No formal *conditions* were attached at the 2024 renewal.

2. Recommendations:

- 1. Ensure, as far as possible, that the restructuring of the national park management and services does not jeopardise the exceptionally good work done so far; continue lobbying for an annual grant from the government that is sufficient to cover the fixed costs of the park; continue working to find a full replacement of former European Union funds through national grants to be able to adequately address ongoing and acute challenges; continue investigating alternative sources of financing;*

The Authority continued to operate under the revised management structure that clarifies reporting routes and supports efficiency, informed by earlier restructuring decisions, and

planned for future changes to safeguard the Authority's statutory functions. The case continues to be made, via National Parks England, for a financial settlement that puts national parks on a sustainable footing. The Authority has continued to explore alternative financing streams in the context of inflationary pressures and planning-related cost increases.

2. *Maintain all activities that contribute to mitigating the negative effects of climate change, such as the natural sequestration of carbon and greenhouse gases, woodland recovery, sustainable farming, adapted housing and changing the modes of travel within, and to and from, the national park; support alternative forms of climate change mitigation, such as the projected storage of carbon dioxide under the sea, only if they do not jeopardise the natural assets of the national park;*

The Authority reports annually on Carbon Management Progress Report. Key activities in 2025-26 included:

- Continued peatland restoration (see recommendation 3. below)
- Ongoing monitoring of wildfire risk and support for strategic mitigation approaches
- Woodland creation (see recommendation 9. below)
- Liaison with Peak Cluster, a partnership of 4 cement manufacturers in and around the Peak District, to support transport of carbon for sub-marine storage without harming the special qualities of the National Park
- Support for reductions in carbon emissions in the farming sector (see recommendation 10. below)
- Reduction in the Authority's own carbon emissions continued, with a 63% decrease since 2009/10

3. *Continue working for the recovery of the moorlands and bogs to a reasonable ecological status, including enhanced resilience to wildfires; maintain collaboration with the water suppliers who need healthy moorlands as catchment areas for drinking water supplies;*

The Moors for the Future partnership continued moorland restoration work. During the year a capital works programme of £1.6-2 million was delivered, including bare peat restoration, gully blocking and reprofiling to restore peatland hydrology, and planting of Sphagnum and other species. The three water companies within the Partnership have indicated their intention to continue to provide significant funding (up to circa £25 million) for peatland restoration in the period 2025-30. The Authority has continued to bring partners together for the Peak District Fire Operations Group (FOG) including fire fighting training events.

The National Trust continued moorland restoration work as part of its High Peak Vision.

4. *Continue managing the limestone dales and their woodlands in a way that preserves the ecological values of the habitats; develop research on new and adapted caretaking methods;*

The multi-partnership Wye Valley Nature Recovery Project, led by Natural England, continued work at a landscape scale to create and restore wildlife-rich habitats, corridors and stepping-stones ([Helping nature to recover and thrive in the Wye Valley in Derbyshire – Natural England](#)). Works included:

- Promoting biodiversity with herbal leys

- Improving the flow of the River Lathkill
- Utilising roadside verges as wildlife corridors
- Dewpond restoration

The Life in the Ravines project ([Home - Life in the Ravines](#)) continued to address the severe impacts of ash dieback on the internationally important *Tilio-Acerion* woodlands of the Peak District Dales SAC. A total of 69,000 trees have been successfully planted since 2021, restoring almost 54 hectares of ash woodlands and enhancing future resilience.

5. *Further develop scientific research on wild species, habitats and ecosystem services to support inventories and monitoring in order to provide the necessary background for future decision making on conservation and management;*

Defra funding was secured to establish a national Landscape Observatory led by National Parks England and the Protected Landscapes Partnership. This is based on pioneering work by the Peak District National Park Authority in partnership with several research bodies, using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to generate fine scale maps which detect habitats and landscape features quickly and accurately. The funding provided for 4 main workstreams, led by the Peak District, in 2025/26 :

1. The establishment of the Landscape Observatory, its Board and Steering Group.
2. Rolling out AI land cover mapping from the Peak District to other Protected Landscapes.
3. Explore the potential for rapid condition assessment of Protected Landscape features using AI, digital modelling and field methodologies.
4. Climate change adaptation decision making and prioritisation.

6. *Undertake feasibility studies to determine if the current conditions of the moorlands and adjacent woodlands are suitable for the reintroduction of the black grouse (*Lyrurus tetrix*), and other signature species of these habitats that have disappeared or are at risk of extinction, and define the management measures that should be taken to assure a successful release of those species into the wild, as a first step toward their future return to the Peak District National Park;*

Initial discussions have been held with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust about undertaking a feasibility study for the reintroduction of Black Grouse, bearing in mind likely climate change impacts and learning lessons from a previous failed introduction attempt in the Peak District and a current reintroduction project in the North York Moors National Park. The Trust have also led on a public consultation regarding the potential reintroduction of European Beavers (*Castor fiber*) to parts of the Peak District.

7. *Continue liaising with gamekeepers and moorland owners and managers to make sure that hunting in the moorlands maintains its ecological functionality;*

The Authority convened a 'retreat' with key moorland managers, representatives and stakeholders to explore the role of moorland in nature recovery. The retreat also established principles as to how to work together as part of a refreshed approach.

The Authority also contributed to workshops and consultation regarding the Heather and Grass Burning (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2025, which came into force in September 2025. The regulations restrict burning on peat over 30cm. deep

(previously 40 cm.) without a licence, and significantly extend the area of peatland over which there is a presumption against burning.

8. *Deepen knowledge on the birds of prey in the park and implement measures to prevent their mistreatment and other causes of non-natural mortality;*

There was limited action on this recommendation during 2024/25 due to the closure of the Peak District Bird of Prey Initiative in 2023 ([Peak District Bird of Prey Initiative to close as persecution cases continue: Peak District National Park](#)) and reduced capacity in local raptor groups. However two Hen Harrier chicks from a Peak District nest were fitted with satellite tags to provide information about their movements and to deter persecution.

There was one report of bird of prey persecution in the Peak District in 2025- a Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*) found shot in the White Peak, which underwent rehabilitation.

9. *Continue working on the expansion of native woodland and other forms of tree- and shrub-covered areas and the return of woodlands to a natural or semi-natural state in order to increase their biodiversity and resilience to sudden events like the ash dieback disease;*

Woodland creation continued, informed by the Wooded Landscapes Plan [Wooded Landscape Plan - Landscape Strategy Appendix 2](#). The National Park Authority continued the collaborative Grow Back Greener woodland creation project with the Woodland Trust, promoting small farm woodland creation, with 20.26 hectares planted across 13 sites during the year. A Landscape Trees project was also launched, funded by the charitable Peak District National Park Foundation, to promote boundary, field and landscape tree planting in appropriate areas across the National Park.

The National Trust continued planning towards large-scale woodland and moorland scrub creation through planting and natural regeneration as part of their High Peak Estate Vision, in liaison with the National Park Authority and other partners through the "One Team" collaborative arrangements to ensure early engagement.

10. *Increase the percentage of local farms which co-operate with the national park in improving the ecological level of farming standards and the quality of cultural heritage preservation in the park; pursue efforts for appropriate and adequate agri-environment scheme support and a continuation of funding dedicated to environmentally sustainable farming building on the experience of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme;*

National Park Authority staff continued to represent the English National Park Authorities at national stakeholder events to influence the national Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) to ensure that they deliver for the special qualities of the National Park. The Authority's farm Advisers continue to promote national and local environmental schemes amongst farmers, though the suspension of the national Sustainable Farming Incentive and Capital Grants programme part-way through the year hindered progress.

The well-received Farming in Protected Landscapes programme continued to provide financial assistance to farmers and landowners across the National Park to deliver National Park objectives, under the four themes of climate, nature, people and place ([Farming In Protected Landscapes: Peak District National Park](#)). Since its launch in 2021

457 projects have been funded with 827 farmers taking part, resulting in 4221 hectares of land managed for wildlife, 53 rivers and streams protected/enhanced, 77 ponds created, 38 cultural heritage features restored, and 31 km. of hedgerows planted/restored.

- 11. Ensure that local plan policies and planning decisions only support the growth of the mineral extraction and quarrying industries in the park if they follow rules to ensure that key values and assets of the national park are not endangered, and where possible are enhanced;*

The Authority approved the Local Plan Preferred Approach in September 2025. This sets out draft planning policies and policy directions. It includes draft Minerals policies that Mineral Planning Authorities should, as far as practical, maintain landbanks of minerals from outside National Parks, and that proposals for new or extended mineral operations (other than fluorspar proposals and building and roofing stone) will not be permitted within the National Park other than in exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, draft policy requires restoration schemes which contribute to the spatial outcomes of the Plan, focusing mainly on amenity (nature conservation) after-uses rather than agriculture or forestry, and should include a combination of biodiversity gain, wildlife and landscape enhancement, recreation, public access where appropriate and recognition of cultural heritage and industrial archaeological features.

- 12. Continue addressing new and so-far underrepresented groups of people on the purpose and assets of the national park and, at the same time, actively look for ways of supporting existing volunteers and their associations, for both nature and heritage conservation;*

Via the [Generation Green 2](#) project, the Authority has supported the Youth Hostel Association, who lead the coalition, to deliver nature connection experiences in the National Park to 431 young people, including 225 young people from disadvantaged communities on day visits and 20 young people on a farm visit ; and working closely with Outdoor Centres for amazing night under the stars experiences for 188 young people from disadvantaged communities.

The Ambassador Schools programme aims to foster strong, lasting connections between schools and the National Park. With 20 participating schools, both primary and secondary, located within or near the Park, the project promotes outdoor learning, nature connection, and environmental stewardship among young people.

- 13. Continue investigating innovative methods of landscape monitoring and planning to obtain deeper insights into the current situation of the national park;*

Work on AI-generated land cover maps from aerial photographs continued- see Recommendation 5. above.

- 14. Continue developing tourism activities in a way that protects and enhances both the interests of the local communities and the environment and supports the local economy; increase the proportion of visitors using sustainable methods of travel; immediately react to signs of potential or actual over-tourism;*

With over 13 million visits to the National Park each year, the Peak District remains one of the most accessible and heavily visited National Parks in the UK. In May 2025 the Authority adopted a Tourism Charter to help manage visitors, working in partnership, in

order to achieve better experiences for visitors and positive outcomes for communities, nature and the landscape. The Charter will be delivered through:

- Research and data sharing to better understand visitor volumes, patterns and impacts
- Working in partnership to manage the impact of visitor pressure
- Taking an area-based management approach at key locations to improve the visitor experience and reduce negative impacts
- Increasing opportunities for visiting and using the National Park without a private vehicle whilst seeking new or better ways to manage the impact of vehicle use
- Coordinating consistent communications that inform responsible behaviour
- Agreeing protocols around what, where and when we promote the National Park

15. Make more use of the European Diploma logo in all information material and brochures, and explain the relevance of the diploma wherever appropriate, in particular on the park's own premises and website.

The Diploma logo continued to be incorporated within Authority publications, digital materials, and key visitor-facing communications.

3. Site Management:

A reduction in the core funding to the Authority has resulted in a reorganization in order to safeguard the Authority's statutory functions. In particular this has resulted in a reduction in Engagement staff which has impacted actions. The Authority is exploring and implementing a number of options to maintain and enhance future income streams from diverse sources.

4. Boundaries:

No changes.

5. Other information:

None