

## European Diploma for Protected Areas

### **Peak District National Park, United Kingdom: Annual report for the year 2017-18**

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 (7 years ago)

#### **Central authority concerned:**

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Address: National Park Office

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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.**

2.

The 2018-23 National Park Management Plan was adopted in September 2018 and includes an update of the National Park's Special Qualities. Seven special qualities and six areas of impact have been highlighted together with an action plan. Please see at:

[https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/1286063/National-Park-Management-Plan-2018-2023.pdf](https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1286063/National-Park-Management-Plan-2018-2023.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 continues to work to safeguard key habitats through negotiation of new agri-environment schemes and ensuring renewal of expiring agreements for priority sites. However issues with the current national scheme, Countryside Stewardship, continue despite species rich grassland options now becoming more widely available. The area of land in the National Park within an agri-environment scheme agreement has now dropped to around 50%. The Authority continues to influence future policy and support systems post Brexit which will secure and enhance the management of existing key habitats. This includes the development of pilot ideas for how a new scheme based on the White Peak National Character Area of the National Park could properly reward farmers and land managers for delivering a full range of public goods. The Authority, on behalf of English National Park Authorities, continues to identify further improvements to the current scheme as the proposed new Environmental Land Management Scheme is unlikely to be available until 2025.

The South West Peak Landscape Partnership, covering approximately ¼ of the National Park, continues to deliver. Projects relevant to farmland habitats include Future Farmscapes (building relationships with the farming community to further conservation objectives, e.g. signposting agri-environment schemes); Glorious Grasslands (surveying, producing management plans and securing conservation measures for flower-rich haymeadows and waxcap grasslands); and Slowing the Flow (working with natural processes to reduce downstream flooding, e.g. riparian tree planting, "leaky dams", in-field attenuation features and catchment management).

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.**

The Authority, working through the Moors for the Future Partnership (MFF) continues to co-ordinate major landscape scale delivery across upland habitats with the start of Moor Carbon, a £3 million project which is part of Defra's Peatland Restoration Fund. With the biggest capital delivery year so far, this includes a continuation of large-scale blanket bog restoration including revegetation of bare peat, restoration of water levels through extensive gully-blocking and the reintroduction of sphagnum mosses to former bare peat areas and those dominated by purple-moor grass, heather and cotton-grass. Consensus on good practice management for moorlands (blanket bog and deep peat) for the whole of England has been reached and the Moors for the Future partnership produced a land management guidance toolkit on behalf of the national Uplands Management Group (<http://www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk/blanket-bog-land-management-guidance>).

The exceptional summer weather this year gave rise to a number of moorland fires, including an extensive area of moorland at Tameside which extended into the National Park. Operation Firewatch was launched to raise public awareness of fire risk and staff from the National Park, partner organisations and volunteers were stationed at vantage points throughout the National Park to look out for moorland fires.

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

As part of the HLF funded landscape scale partnership in the South West Peak, the Working for Waders project is delivering conservation measures and land management for Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) and Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*). Wader hotspots have been identified, surveys are continuing to take place and wader management plans are being developed for key landholdings. These wader plans give clear practical guidance on conservation measures. A PhD study in partnership with the University of Sheffield and RSPB focusing on Curlew and Snipe habitat requirements has continued. In the Dark Peak surveys have shown a very positive response to moorland restoration by birds such as Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), with a reversal of past declines. Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*), Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) and Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) also increased significantly following restoration. A comprehensive repeat moorland bird survey, funded by Natural England with matched funding from the Moorland Association, National Trust, RSPB, Severn Trent, United Utilities and Yorkshire Water, took place earlier in the year and the results have been collated and are now being analysed. Initial findings seem to be positive.

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

The Peak District Dales SAC supports 21% of the UK's Natura 2000 Tilio-Acerion Ravine Woodlands. Long-term monitoring plots have shown that Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) comprises 71% of the canopy on average, and up to 93% in places. Ash Dieback, which has now spread throughout the National Park, poses a significant threat to the future of these internationally important woodlands. Work has therefore started with partners to diversify these woodlands to ensure their long-term resilience, and a funding bid has been prepared to roll this work out across the whole SAC.

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

Measures to address bird of prey persecution continue through the Peak District Bird of Prey Initiative, but persecution is still considered to be the main reason for lower-than-expected numbers of several moorland species. Other Biodiversity Action Plan targets are being addressed through the various measures described elsewhere, notably under recommendations 1-4, 6 and 7.

**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.**

The area of Authority owned SSSI land in favourable/recovering condition remained at about 96%. On the Authority's Warslow Moors and North Lees Estates a programme of moorland grip blocking has been implemented to restore the hydrology of the sites. The results of this are encouraging, with an increase in surface water and in key bird species such as Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*).

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

In the South West Peak a community grants scheme has been launched, with grants awarded to 13 community groups to date for heritage projects, including art projects, historic building repairs, local history initiatives and local walking trails. Other SW Peak projects are providing opportunities for community volunteering e.g. 60 buildings recorded with the support of more than 30 skilled volunteer days. The Authority continues to contribute to the Sheffield Moors Partnership. In the Dark Peak and South Pennines an integrated approach is co-ordinated by the Moors for the Future partnership through the MoorLIFE 2020 Bogtastic Initiative to raise awareness in the communities around the SAC, including youth engagement activities, a Bogtastic van which brings blanket bogs to people in villages, towns and cities, and an extensive Citizen Science project. The €3.3m Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership project, led by Sheffield Wildlife Trust has developed a series of projects to engage local communities in enhancing the National Park's moorland fringe landscapes to the north-west of Sheffield. This partnership has recently been awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the delivery phase.

**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. Several strands of the South West Peak Landscape Partnership focus on cultural heritage. "Peak Land Lives" has completed 25 interviews with farming families in the area, capturing and recording local people's memories of the area and the illustrated book is at final draft stage. Of the 2907 Listed Buildings (plus two further buildings designated this year) the number at risk remains low and relatively constant at c.6%, and of the 470 Scheduled Ancient Monuments only 7 (1.5%) are at risk. The Historic Farmstead Characterisation is providing guidance on the appropriate features to conserve and enhance the character of traditional farmsteads for development proposals.

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

The number of Peak District Environmental Quality Mark (EQM) award holders continues at around seventy including accommodation providers, food producers, land management businesses and tourism/recreation businesses. The Authority continues to champion the EQM and hosts the EQM Community Interest Community. This award recognises businesses which support their local economy, work to reduce their environmental impact, play an active role in their local community and help celebrate, conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park.

Support has also been provided for the further development of the "Inspired by the Peak District" brand, developed for businesses across the Peak District to use. A new Inspired by the Peak District brand toolkit has been developed which links to businesses using and looking after the special qualities of the Peak District landscape.

**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.**

Restoration works that have been undertaken in line with a Prohibition Order relating to land on Longstone Edge East, including Backdale Quarry, have now been completed. After many years of uncertainty about the possibility of extraction continuing at this site, the Order makes it clear that mineral working cannot resume. The site is visible from many vantage points and has a considerable landscape impact. The restoration works undertaken in Backdale Quarry make a significant positive contribution to the landscape of the National Park and this will be set to continue over the next few years as the site re-vegetates.

Stanton Moor Quarry is in the central part of Stanton Moor and is an area of heather moorland with birch scrub. The moor is a designated Scheduled Monument due to its Bronze Age heritage. Stanton Moor Quarry is partially within this Scheduled Monument designation. In the 1950's the government granted permission for a number of sites for mineral extraction within this central part of the moor. These permissions had very few operational controls. Under current planning policies, Stanton Moor Quarry would not be granted planning permission. After several refused applications and many years of negotiation, a proposal was made to relinquish Stanton Moor Quarry and alternatively work a 50,000 tonnes extension at New Pilhough Quarry, which is located close by but in a less sensitive area. The legal agreement ensures that no further extraction can take place at Stanton Moor Quarry and a revocation order was issued to confirm this position. The way in which this exchange was undertaken was exactly in line with the Authority's well-established Stanton Moor Principles. This positive outcome protects the central area of the moor from the threat of quarrying in perpetuity, and it is the last of the old mineral permissions in the Stanton Moor Area. The successful implementation of the Stanton Moor Principles maintained over a 17 year period was formally recognised in May 2018 at the RTPI Awards for Excellence in Planning for Heritage and Culture.

The majority of sites operating in the Peak District National Park undertake progressive restoration as part of their working scheme. Many sites are currently undergoing progressive restoration or, having been restored, are in a period of prescriptive aftercare to bring the site to a beneficial after-use. Most restoration is designed to help the National Park achieve biodiversity targets in the biodiversity action plan. An example of this is the restoration work that has been progressing at Shining Bank Quarry where the Authority has been working with the minerals company and the landowner to create a site which it is hoped will provide suitable habitat for White-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*).

**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.**

We continue to work with a range of partners to pursue approaches that put into practice the aims of the Charter for Sustainable Tourism, including responsible event management, responsible visitor management campaigns and various sustainable transport projects. The Authority hosts the Pedal Peak business initiative which has developed the rural cycle tourism, and in particular supporting businesses to become more cycling-friendly and to use the special qualities of the National Park in their business offer.

**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.

The Authority has continued its Asset Management work, seeking opportunities to dispose of smaller properties of lower conservation value or properties where the conservation interest can be managed by others, to ensure resources are focused on priority sites. 10 small woodlands have been sold or are in the process of sale during the year. In addition a number of leasehold woodlands have been surrendered back to the landowner now that the woodlands are in good management regime.

**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.

There are 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.

The Authority has secured a further grant of £180,000 from National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund to carry out landscape enhancement works in the Longdendale Valley to ameliorate the visual impacts of the high voltage electricity line. Enhancement works are continuing before a further bid is considered. Preparatory work to underground a section of high voltage line at Dunford Bridge is also underway, having bid successfully against other sites nationally.

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**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.