



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
Committee of Ministers
Comité des Ministres

European Diploma for Protected Areas

Peak District National Park, United Kingdom: Annual report for the year 2018-19

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 (8 years ago)

Central authority concerned:

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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.

The 2018-23 National Park Management Plan was adopted in May 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.

Implementation of the National Park Management Plan delivery plan continues, with the Annual Monitoring Report being agreed in May 2019. Please see at:

<https://democracy.peakdistrict.gov.uk/documents/s30004/NPMP%20YEAR%201%20AMR%2018-19%20Appendix%201.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 safeguard key habitats through negotiation of new national agri-environment schemes, ensuring renewal of expiring agreements for priority sites and delivery of its own small-scale land management grant scheme. Despite minor improvements issues with the current national scheme, Countryside Stewardship, continue. The scheme attracts fewer farmers and land managers and the area of land in the National Park within an agri-environment scheme agreement has now dropped to less than 50%. The Authority continues to influence future policy and the development of the proposed Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMs) which will use public money for the delivery of public goods including securing and enhancing the management of existing key habitats. Elements of the White Peak Pilot Ideas for a new support scheme have been selected by Defra for ELMs phase 1 testing of some of the building blocks for the new scheme. The Authority, on behalf of English National Park Authorities, continues to identify further improvements to the current scheme as the new ELMs is unlikely to be available until 2025.

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 for the protection of cultural heritage.

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 continuation of major projects including EU-funded MoorLIFE 2020 and Defra-funded Moor Carbon, and a new £3 million project funded by the Water Environment Grant to model locations for 100,000 gully blocks and construction of 7,800 of them

in the next 3 years. It is again 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 (*Molinia caerulea*), heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and cotton-grass (*Eriophorum spp.*). Following the delivery of the land management guidance toolkit on behalf of the national Uplands Management Group (<http://www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk/blanket-bog-land-management-guidance>), Moors for the Future Partnership has worked with the Heather Trust to engage land managers in an event which was part of a series on 'What are the UK's Uplands For?'

Additional blanket bog diversification is underway in the South West Peak with funds from a Water Environment Grant being used to plant sphagnum on degraded bogs.

As in 2018 the moorlands, despite the extensive work to restore the blanket bog, continue to be susceptible to both spring and summer fires, especially on the fringe moorland sites. Fortunately in 2019 wildfires were limited in impact, although the first known significant fire on moorland in winter months took place in February 2019. However the Peak District National Park Authority continues to chair and act as the secretariat to the Peak District Fires Operation Group, a partnership approach to informing visitors of fire risk and to address, through the leadership of constituent fire services, any fire emergencies on moorland in the National Park.

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 landscape scale partnership in the South West Peak funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, 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 have been developed for 25 landholdings. These wader plans give clear practical guidance on conservation measures. An applied PhD in partnership with the University of Sheffield and RSPB focusing on the relationship between food availability and rush management on Curlew and Snipe populations has continued.

The results from the 2018 comprehensive moorland bird survey were analysed by the British Trust for Ornithology. Twelve of the 29 species analysed significantly increased between 1990 and 2018 including Lapwing, Curlew and Snipe, all in contrast to national declines, and three new species colonised (Raven (*Corvus corax*), Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*) and Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)). Three species- Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*), Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*) and Twite (*Carduelis flavirostris*) were found to have significantly declined in abundance since 1990, whilst Black Grouse (*Tetrao tetrix*) declined to extinction in 2000 despite significant conservation measures. Of the 3 species for which the South Pennine Moors (Peak District Moors) SPA is designated, both Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) and Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammea*) showed a significant increase whilst Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) showed a slight (not statistically significant) decline. The analysis explored possible drivers of change in these populations, looking at grouse moor management, moorland restoration, grazing, disturbance and agri-environment schemes.

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

Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) is now widespread in the Peak District and poses a threat to the Peak District Dales SAC Tilio-Acerion Ravine Woodlands. Work has started with partners to diversify these woodlands to ensure their long-term resilience. Resubmission of a LIFE funding bid to roll this work out across the whole SAC is proposed.

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. A pair of Hen Harriers (*Circus cyaneus*) bred successfully in 2019 for a second consecutive year, the first time this has happened in the Peak District for over 100 years. Breeding numbers of other birds of prey remained similar to 2018. 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.

95.1% of the area of Authority-owned SSSI land is in favourable/recovering condition- a slight decline following reclassification of one woodland following Ash Dieback. 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, with over 10,000 Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) plants counted at North Lees following previous rewetting work. On Warslow revised moorland management plans have now been produced for all the moorlands, with introduction of cattle grazing over 450 ha to control *Molinia* growth and diversify vegetation structure. Several haymeadows have been diversified on both estates using locally sourced green hay. At North Lees Pied Flycatcher (*Ficedula hypoleuca*) numbers have doubled in the woodlands since 2016.

Carbon emissions, sequestration and storage were modelled for the Warslow Moors Estate. The net Carbon footprint was 700 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e), compared to 10,600 tCO₂e for an agriculturally improved estate. 925,000 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent is 'permanently' stored in soils on the Warslow Moors Estate as a result of current management practices.

We have embarked on a series of improvements and repairs to structures along the trails in our ownership, including listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets. This includes refurbishing the old station buildings at Millers Dale on the Monsal Trail as a new café for walkers and cyclists, and over £300K funding was secured to provide a roof for the adjacent, unused, goods shed which will become a new interpretation and multi-function space for visitors.

Works to enhance the cultural heritage assets of Authority-owned land included scrub control on a scheduled Bronze Age settlement site and field system; erosion repair on a medieval motte and bailey castle, refurbishment of a listed chapel to bring it back into community use; historic barn restoration; stabilisation of two scheduled Bronze Age barrows affected by a moorland wildfire in 2018; and repairs to the listed Market Hall in Bakewell.

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 well-received, with 56 grants (40 this year) awarded to 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. 66 buildings recorded this year with the support of more than 40 skilled volunteer days. Unique 'ore-bins' at an historically important 18th and 19th century lead and zinc mine were excavated and consolidated by 24 volunteers over 4 weeks, working with experts in mining and lime mortaring. 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 moorland Junior Ranger group, a Bogtastic van which brings blanket bogs to people in villages, towns and cities and a coordinated Be Fire Aware campaign, raising awareness of moorland fires.

The Authority held a National Park-wide 'Year of Green Action' conference that was led by speakers and exhibitors from the resident community who shared their conservation projects and inspired other community groups to undertake their own – all supported by our community grants.

The Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership project, led by Sheffield Wildlife Trust has restored 34 stiles to improve public access in the NE of the National Park, and walling and fencing were carried out at High Bradfield to protect wetland areas and encourage the establishment of streamside trees to improve natural flood management. University students surveyed the site of a former WWI and WWII Prisoner of War Camp as part of a community research project, attracting national media coverage.

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. We continue to work with other National Parks and other national bodies towards our Joint Statement Action Plan for the protection and promotion of the historic environment.

The cultural heritage strategy and action plan is being revised and embedded into an updated Landscape Strategy. The number of Scheduled Monuments has increased to 473, of which 9 are on the Heritage at Risk list (1.9%). The number of Listed Buildings (2909) remained the same, and the number at risk remains low at c.6%. A successful prosecution for illegal removal of historic timbers from a listed building has sent a clear message that the Authority is prepared and able to take enforcement action where necessary. Training was carried out to enhance volunteer and ranger capacity to monitor the condition of scheduled monuments and listed buildings.

New archaeological engagement resources have been developed with partners for family activity days, including portable min-dig pits which allow young children to discover real archaeological artefacts.

A PDNPA-organised day school for rural, wildlife and heritage crime brought together a wide range of organisations to heighten awareness of heritage crime, and share learning and best practice in its prevention, detect and reporting.

We continue to foster a wide range of external partnerships, including with the National Trust, Universities and community groups to work on specific projects and facilitate research into the historic environment.

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, the resulting book entitled 'The Land That Made Us' is now published and on sale.

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

There are around 60 Peak District Environmental Quality Mark (EQM) award holders 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 (CIC). 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. The EQM CIC has updated its website and application process so that it better encourages businesses to participate and enhance the Peak District environment.

Support has also been provided for the "Inspired by the Peak District" brand, used by over 500 businesses across the Peak District and linking businesses which use and look 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.

All sites in the National Park are now worked under modern working 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 is designed to achieve net gains by helping the National Park achieve biodiversity targets in the biodiversity action plan. A good example of this is Topley Pike Quarry where a permission has been issued at an existing site to facilitate more extraction in the existing quarry but also secured the restoration of an adjacent valley including removal of several hundred thousand tonnes of quarry waste deposited over 50 years ago, and the reinstatement of habitat.

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. In the summer of 2019 we piloted a new sustainable method of travel for visitors to one of the most popular locations in the National Park. The Hope Valley Explorer bus, complete with audio commentary, operated during July and August and

encouraged some 2,600 passenger journeys by public transport in its first season. Feedback from the operator and users has now led to proposals for increased capacity and route amendments for year two of the three-year scheme, along with improved rail service linkages. The Authority also continues to undertake feasibility studies around the installation of e-charging points within the National Park. After a successful Discover England Fund-backed programme concluding in 2019 around the 'English National Parks Experience Collection', a proposed phase two of the scheme will see a focus on domestic markets and improved, sustainable 'final mile' benefits for visitors. If successful, delivery of the programme would begin in 2020.

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. The disposal and relinquishment of small woodlands is chiefly completed. The project on disposal of smaller properties is also complete resulting in some key properties being retained due to the special local interest or high ecological values. All properties now revert for consideration under a major Asset Management Review due for completion in 2020. As part of this review process there has been a revision of the disposal strategy. Management and improvements of retained properties continues subject to funding availability with reconsideration of properties identified as surplus to the requirement of the overarching objectives of the Authority.

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 continues to carry out landscape enhancement works in the Longdendale Valley to ameliorate the visual impacts of the high voltage electricity line, supported by grant from National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund.

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.
