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**COMMITTEE FOR THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNCIL
OF EUROPE IN THE FIELD OF BIOLOGICAL
AND LANDSCAPE DIVERSITY**

CO-DBP

**Group of Specialists - European Diploma
for Protected Areas**

**PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK
(United Kingdom)**

RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

Expert Report by

by Mr Jan Lundqvist (Sweden)

The European Diploma was awarded to the Peak District National Park in 1966 and thereafter renewed.

The secretariat did not accompany the expert on his visit to the park.

Appendix II contains Resolution (96) 24, which was adopted when the Diploma was last renewed. Appendix VI contains a draft resolution prepared by the secretariat for the purpose of a further renewal.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The European Diploma, Category C¹, was awarded to the Peak District National Park, United Kingdom, in 1966. The present period of validity of the Diploma² is due to expire in 2001.

In accordance with article 5 of the European Diploma regulations, annual reports have been submitted to the Council of Europe by the Peak District National Park Authority.

Order

By letter of 18 May 2000, the Secretariat of the Council of Europe asked me to carry out an on-the-spot appraisal of the Peak District National Park in order to consider the renewal of its European Diploma.

The visit

I visited the Peak District from 23 July (afternoon) to 26 July and stayed at Losehill Hall National Study Centre in Castleton. Christopher Harrison, National Park Officer of the Park, explained organisation, policies and management the first afternoon, accompanied me on 26 July and took part in discussions and de-briefing the last day. Three of the four Assistant National Park Officers briefed me on their work. John Lomas, Head of Conservation, accompanied me throughout the visit from 24 to 26 July. John Anfield, Head of Planning, and John Thompson, Head of Recreation, showed and explained recent projects and planning situations. Two evenings I had dinner with Partner representatives and Conservation and Community representatives expressing their view of co-operation with the National Park administration.

The programme was very comprehensive. Visited sites, topics and all people I met are specified in *Appendix 1* by John Lomas. Here I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everybody who took part in the appraisal.

The last day, after de-briefing, I went for a study tour myself by car to the northern Dark Peak area.

¹ Resolution (66) 22 of the Committee of Ministers.

² Resolution (96) 24 of the Committee of Ministers.

THE DIPLOMA AREA

The Peak District National Park is situated in northern England, between Sheffield and Manchester, in an upland area 110-636 m above sea level. It covers 1 438 km² and comprises two distinct parts: the southern central part, the “White Peak”, a high limestone plateau with farmland and its characteristic deep dales and stone walls, and the northern and western part, the “Dark Peak”, a gritstone area covered with moors. The northern moors constitute a water catchment area with 52 water reservoirs which is of very high importance for the water supply of neighbouring cities.

The Diploma area is of high landscape quality. Half of the National Park area (54 %) consists of grazing and mowing fields enclosed by about 8 750 km of characteristic dry-stone walls, 35 % is open moorland and 8 % is woodland. The central and southern parts of the Peak District are characterised mainly by sheep, beef and dairy farming. Significant areas of unimproved grassland still exist. A resident population of 38 100 people live in small towns, 100 villages and on 2000 farms. There are several large areas with fine country houses and unspoilt villages in local style. The region has a long cultural history and numerous monuments; a Norman castle, Neolithic stone circles and disused lead mines. The area’s cultural and archaeological heritage is outstanding.

The park is of enormous recreational importance for the population of the neighbouring urban areas. Approximately 20 million people live within one hour’s drive of the park, and the Diploma area has more than 22 million visitor days each year³. Only 22 % of all those visitors stay over night⁴.

LEGAL STATUS

National Parks in Britain confer the highest status of protection for landscape and scenic beauty, and consist of lived-in landscapes, with little true, unmanaged, wilderness and with small nature reserves. They are to a large extent in private ownership, where development is limited by public control, and where recreation would be provided by private and public investment.

The Peak District National Park was established in 1951 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949, later on updated by the Environment Act in 1995. From 1997 the Park has been administrated by a National Park Authority⁵ which replaced an earlier Joint Planning Board. The new Authority has 38 members, of which 20 are appointed by the County, District and Metropolitan Councils, and 18 by the Secretary of State⁶. Members’ primary roles are in three areas; Corporate decision making, review of operation and public relations.

³ Estimated in 1966 (through traffic and evening visits are excluded)

⁴ Most figures in this report are from the Best Value Performance Plan 2000

⁵ Created by the 1995 Environment Act.

⁶ Of whom 8 must be Parish Councillors.

The Environment Act 1995 sets out purposes of the National Park Authority which carries out planning functions as one means of achieving them. The twin purposes are:

- Conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and
- Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public, and seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park but without incurring significant costs, by co-operating with the local authorities and agencies responsible for these matters.

Not only the National Park Authority, but any relevant authority must have regard to these purposes when carrying out functions related to or affecting the National Park. If the two purposes appear to conflict, greater weight is to be given to conservation and enhancement.

The Peak District National Park Authority is both the National Park and Local Planning Authority for the area under the Peak District National Park Designation Order 1951. The Authority has responsibilities to prepare the statutory Land Use Development Plan (Structure Plan and Local Plan) and Management Plan in conjunction with the other agencies and stakeholders in the Park. The Structure Plan was adopted in 1994 and concluded a major review of planning strategy for the Park. It provides the most authoritative interpretation of national policies in the context of local circumstances. The Park-wide Local Plan⁷ was adopted in 1997. It sets out more detailed policies and proposals and deals with specific areas and sites, as necessary. Main subjects are conservation, housing, community services, economy, recreation and tourism, utilities, minerals, waste management, transport and Bakewell town.

The Management Plan, Strategy 2000-2005, was adopted in April 2000. It sets out a range of policies and proposals both for the way in which land and landscape might best be managed and for the delivery of the National Park Authority's services to the public. The success of the Management Plan depends on two principles which underlie methods of working: sustainable development and partnership. The Peak District Management Plan supersedes the National Park Plan which was adopted in 1989 and reviewed in 1995. Some specific objectives and policies in the 1989 Park Plan are still valid. Action Plans will be developed complementary over the plan period to guide management on the ground.

ADMINISTRATION AND BUDGET

The National Park is administered by the National Park Authority Executive. Under the National Park Officer there are four Assistant National Park Officers who are head of Divisions for: Planning, Conservation, Recreation and Secretary & Solicitor. Number of permanently employed staff is 250⁸ plus 30 full time temporary and fixed term contract staff plus volunteers. Total expenditure in 2000 was over £ 9.8 million. Source of funds was 46 % National Park grant (Government), 39 % income generation and 15 % Local Authority levy.

⁷ Prepared in accordance with the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act, the Town and Planning Regulations, and the 1991 Planning and Compensation Act.

⁸ = 194 whole time equivalent.

LAND OWNERSHIP

- Privately owned 62 %
- Water Companies 14 %
- The National Trust 11 %
- Major Estates 6 %
- National Park Authority 4 %
- Local Authorities 2 %
- Others 1%

Land ownership has changed very little over the last five years. Properties owned by the National Park (59 km²) consist of traditional tenanted agricultural Estates, woodland, four disused railway lines converted to recreational routes, trails, 48 car parks, six camp/caravan sites, seven visitor centres, ten Ranger Briefing Centres and the National Park Study Centre at Losehill Hall⁹.

PROTECTED AREAS

National Nature Reserve (NNR)

The only National Nature Reserve within the Park is Derbyshire Dales NNR which covers an area of 350 ha. It is managed by English Nature.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Most of the Peak District's moorland is designated as SSSIs by English Nature to be of particular importance for its flora, fauna and geological interest¹⁰. They cover a total area of 44 229 ha (31 %). Planning authorities, statutory bodies and owners and occupiers of SSSIs are required to consult with English Nature if developments or changes in management are proposed.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA)

In Environmentally Sensitive Areas¹¹ farmers, if they so wish, receive an annual payment per hectare of land in return for the use of traditional management methods. Total area is 75 007 ha.

Natura 2000 sites

Most of the moorland is classified as Special Protection Area (SPA)¹². Several other areas, with focus on flower-rich grasslands and woodlands, have been selected as candidate Special Protection Areas of Conservation (pSAC)¹³. Total area Natura 2000 sites (SPA and pSAC) is 38 774 ha (27 %).

⁹ Full description in Appendix 4 in the Annual Report for the Peak National Park for October 1996 to September 1997.

¹⁰ Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

¹¹ Scheme introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1987 under Article 19 of EEC Regulation 797/85 on Agriculture Structures.

¹² European Union Directive 79/409/EEG on the Conservation of wild birds.

¹³ European Union Directive 92/43/EEG on the Conservation of natural habitats and habitats of species (Article 3-11) and Protection of species (Article 12-16).

Cultural Heritage

There are about 363 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM), 104 Conservation Area designations (building conservation) and 2 896 listed buildings within the Diploma area. There are many grant aided historic building conservation projects and Conservation Area work programmes.

MANAGEMENT

Historic landscape features and farmland

The present-day landscape is the product of thousands of years of human activity. As a result, a wealth of sites and landscapes, buildings and settlements make up the cultural heritage of the park. So far only 30 % of the National Park landscape has been surveyed archaeologically. There has been a great loss of key landscape elements and important historical features. Due to mineral extraction and agricultural improvement 35-70 % of the Park's archaeological features have been lost since World War 2. Remaining areas of lead mine rakes and other old mine waste material disposals also are of very high conservation value, containing unique vegetation types and insect fauna.

The medieval villages and field systems, with their characteristic dry-stone walls, need intense conservation/management initiatives to prevent wall removal and encourage restoration work and traditional land use. The Park Authority assists in restoring stone walls¹⁴.

Key habitats for nature conservation, e.g. hay meadows and wetlands, are seriously affected by modern farming techniques. About 75 % of the area of hay meadow has been lost during the last ten years, and continue to decline at an alarming rate. This problem was highlighted in the 1997 Hay Meadow Project Report¹⁵ and also showed the lack of success in securing all the meadows into conservation agreements.

Sustainable farming systems and efficient ways of economic compensation and various partnership programmes with farmers are of high priority today. The National Park Authority uses integrated management to fulfil its conservation remit, and gives a free service for farmers and land managers in how to obtain countryside grants and advice. Normally managers of the Park's Archaeology, Ecology and Farm & Countryside Services work together in survey and preparation of agreements with farmers. Payments within the National Park Farm Conservation Scheme have been increased. Co-operating partners are normally the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature, the Forestry Commission, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Countryside Stewardship Scheme), the farming community and local people. There have been new opportunities for farmers within the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and in the two large Environmentally Sensitive Areas to get higher payments for traditional use of hay meadows. In special cases land will be purchased for conservation purposes by the National Park Authority or national organisations e.g. English Nature.

¹⁴ 13 km wall rebuilding through National Park Authority schemes 1999.

¹⁵ Further information in "Meadows beyond the Millennium" published by the Peak District National Park Authority 1999.

Limestone dales and moorland management

The limestone dales are of major landscape and recreational importance (White Peak). More than 2 100 ha are proposed Natura 2000 sites (pSAC) of European importance for flower rich grasslands and woodland. A majority of the limestone dales are SSSIs, where grant schemes are offered by English Nature, the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Park Authority. Several large sites are in ownership by conservation bodies.

The report “Hidden Heaths” (1999) describes fifteen areas within the White Peak of an unique hybrid landscape of heather on limestone where acid and calcareous plants co-exist. The National Park Authority has given priority action to limestone heaths since the 1980s, and both the Authority and other organisations have already secured the protection for some of these important sites. There is still need for working together with land managers at each site to get appropriate management and restoration of heath.

Moorland covers 509 km² (Dark Peak), of which 370 km² is Natura 2000 (SPA) site of European importance for birds. In 1976 a Moorland Management Project was set up, which started research on causes and extent of erosion, and continued to give advice on management practices and monitoring of moorland. The North Peak was established an Environmentally Sensitive Area in 1988. It covers 370 km² of moors and associated farms. From the very beginning more than 70 % of the North Peak’s ESA was in voluntary agreements with landowners. The moorland is always threatened by accidental fires, heavy grazing and air pollution. Soil erosion caused by trampling along the Pennine Way, a long-distance National Trail, has been partly restored by using flat stones. A major restoration project: “Moors for the Future” is prepared to restore the worst eroded moorland sites and enhance people’s experience of moorland heritage and their understanding of how to safeguard this for the future. The project will be funded to a large extent by the Heritage Lottery Fund in co-operation with partners. A decision on the application is expected in 2001.

Land owned by Water Companies

There are long established working partnerships between the National Park Authority and the three water supply companies¹⁶, owners of 14 % of the National Park. These agreements give access to open moorland, many additional paths and information centres. Conservation work on woodland, walling and heather management has benefited from joint working.

Village and town development

The National Park Authority wants to involve local people in developing and improving the living and working environments of their own communities. “Discovering Villages” is a pioneering project in the Peak District which will give the villagers the opportunity to create their own action plans for the future, and it will only work if the ideas come from the villagers themselves. This year around 30 villages are taking part in the project which is being funded by money from central government and the European Union, Objective 5b.

¹⁶ Severn Trent, Yorkshire and North West Water

Interesting local community regeneration and Agenda 21 projects shown to me were the playing development and millennium fountain project in Tideswell, and the village hall reinstatement and the village green enhancement in Bamford.

By 1989 parts of Bakewell town centre were in need of refurbishment, and the town had been long waiting for a swimming pool, a library, a supermarket and more social housing. The livestock market had to be moved out of town centre. The Bakewell Project gave solution to all those needs and has created a lived in, multifaced town centre, which is also attractive to visitors. It shows a good model of sustainable regeneration in a rural area achieved through partnership between many public authorities, agencies, the private sector and interest groups. To date the Bakewell Project represents £ 13 million of public sector investment and has created over 700 jobs and 85 businesses in the Bakewell area.

Integration

To keep the National Park a special place, the National Park Authority has to work together with all the stakeholders in the Park. This integrated way of working for the environment, for people, for a healthy economy and for understanding¹⁷ has proved to be very successful and efficient with regard to use of total resources. But this approach is time and labour consuming due to the large number and complexity of stakeholders in the Park. The National Park Authority works alongside 3 Shire Counties, 4 Metropolitan Districts, 5 Shire Districts, 125 Parish Councils and 4 Regional Government Offices. At least nine Government Agencies have responsibilities and interests in the area. Other identified stakeholders are environment/countryside issues groups, community groups and service, land owning interests, education establishments, recreation interests, economic organisations, utilities and transport.

The National Park Authority is developing its own stronger awareness through improved contacts, opinion polls and attitude surveys along with its own streamlining of the organisation. Partner representatives, Conservation and Community representatives I met in the evenings all expressed their fruitful co-operation with the National Park Authority.

TRANSPORT, RECREATION, INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Studies of the volume of visitors to the park have concluded that there has been very little change in the absolute number of visits¹⁸ to the Park during the 1990s. The 1998 Visitor Survey has also shown very little change in the pattern of visits compared to previous surveys. Visitors come for the reasons why the park was designated; for its scenery and landscape, peace and quiet, and the outdoor recreational opportunities which it provides. The most popular continue to be walking, sightseeing, picnicking, and refreshments and touring around, including visiting villages and attractions. Eight out of ten were repeat visitors, and they were generally satisfied with their visit.

Around nine out of ten visitors come by private motor vehicle. Visitor traffic and cross park traffic create a lot of problems such as noise, traffic jams, serious air pollution. This is regarded as a very serious challenge for the future, started to be met with by the South Pennine Integrated Transport Strategy. But over a million people travelled by bus in the National Park and nearly a quarter of

¹⁷ These are the four main objectives in National Plan Management Plan, Strategy 2000-2005

¹⁸ 19 –22 million day visits per year.

million used the train. The Authority continues to support bus services with 24 bus routes operating under contract and with subsidies where needed. It also works in co-operation with its partners in all forms of public transport, integrated timetables and park and ride schemes, to improve access with towns and cities so as to reduce the use of the car.

The Rangers are the countryside managers who look after public access. They work with local communities on conservation projects, promote good relationship between landowners and visitors and assist in upkeep of about 3 000 km of footpaths, bridleways and byways.

There are seven visitor centres in the Park. I visited two of them; Bakewell National Park and Tourist Information Centre and the Upper Derwent Visitor Centre. Both showed brilliant displays and models explaining important qualities and recreational facilities in the Park.

The Peak District National Park Study Centre at Losehill Hall in Castleton continue to hold very many four day to one week courses, mostly on countryside and wildlife subjects. The National Park Authority Education Visits Service, based at Losehill Hall, and the Youth Hostels Association are working together to serve field studies; residential and day visits for primary and secondary levels.

COMPLIANCE WITH RECOMMENDATIONS IN 1996

The 1996 recommendations are shown in *Appendix 2*.

Recommendation 1. The National Park Structure Plan was adopted 1997 and its Local Plan¹⁹ is due to be published this year. Those two development plan documents contain text and policies relating to sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development is also underlying other policies contained in those plans and is a key principle on which the National Park Management Plan is based.

The National Park Management Plan has been published in 2000. It signalled the preparation of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan for the Peak District. This document is now in preparation and will identify vulnerable habitats and species. The documents will make recommendations for safeguarding habitats and associated species, and guide future research and action by the National Park Authority and other bodies.

Recommendation 2. The lead organisations on water resource management are the UK Government's Environment Agency and the private sector Water Companies. These organisations have legal environmental responsibilities, and in addition they have concluded accords or commitments with the National Park Authority which ensure that National Park values are reflected in the strategies, policies and actions of those organisations.

At the beginning of this year the Environment Agency issued a national consultation document on Sustainable Water Resources for the future. The National Park Authority, in its response to the Environment Agency, drew attention to the Council of Europe Diploma and the recommendation 2.

¹⁹ Deposit edition published in 1997.

The Water Companies are producing land use management plans for their land ownership in water catchment areas. These documents are subject to detailed discussion with the National Park Authority to ensure that environmental policies are properly included.

Recommendation 3. In accordance with the 1995 Environment Act, the National Park Authority has been reviewing old mineral planning consents. All existing sites are being considered, to determine whether the quarrying or mining operations are still active, have ceased or are at present dormant. For active sites, on a case by case basis the Authority is negotiating with the mineral operators in order to satisfactorily reduce environmental impacts, and to prepare acceptable restoration programmes for the sites or part of sites where activity is planned to cease.

Recommendation 4. English Nature has produced an inventory of ancient semi-natural woodlands. Further semi-natural woodland information has been produced as part of the National Park Authority's Section 3 Map of land which it is particularly important to conserve²⁰. The preparation of the Local Biodiversity Plan, referred to under recommendation 1 above, is including in its work Habitat Action Plans for upland ash woodlands, upland oak/birch woodlands, parkland and wood pasture, and wet woodland.

The Forestry Commission is committed to the Biodiversity Action Plan process and is helping to guide the preparation of the woodland action plans. Issues such as woodland landscape conservation and the promotion of local species and stock are integral parts of the action plan considerations.

Recommendation 5. Surveys of visitors to the National Park show that number of visits do not increase. National Park Structure Plan contains overall zoning policies for the Park. With respect to assessment of the National Park, in the context of issues such as the effects of visitor numbers on wildlife, the Authority generally approaches this on an area-by-area basis. This helps to set detailed policies for the Authority and other organisations to help ensure an appropriate balance between the conservation, recreation and social values of the National Park.

Recommendation 6. The road referred to is the A628 through Longdendale in the National Park linking Manchester and Sheffield. In previous years there was considerable discussion about possible substantial improvements to this road and therefore for the need for an environmental impact study. More recently, the consideration of such improvements has been put to one side. Therefore, for the time being at least, there is no environmental impact study needed for the whole valley.

CONCLUSION

Recommendation 1-3 and 5-6 are fulfilled or almost fulfilled. Extensive work has started with regard to recommendation 4.

Sustainable community development, conserving and enhancing the National Park's special qualities and working together with all the stakeholders in the Park are underlying principles in all

²⁰ Under the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985.

planning and management work. Large areas are protected as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or other designations, proposed Natura 2000 sites, owned by conservation bodies or are under conservation agreements. There is a strong policy, in the Structure Plan, now controlling new mineral workings. Structure Plan, Local Plan and Management Plan have been adopted recently. Management work has focus on saving cultural heritage, safeguarding habitat and species, providing access, outdoor recreation, visitor information and environment education.

There are major problem areas which are dealt with in a serious way; strategic transport planning and public transport support, control of mineral development, biodiversity action planning and sustainable farming.

In my opinion the present planning and management of the Peak District National Park is highly satisfactory. I am also very impressed by all efforts done in involving all stakeholders in planning, partnership agreements and understanding of the special qualities and conservation/management needs required in the National Park.

I strongly support that the European Diploma for the Peak District National Park (Category C) should be renewed for another five years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I propose the following recommendations:

1. As soon as possible stop further loss of important key conservation habitats in farmland, especially hay meadows, wetlands, limestone heaths and remaining areas of lead mine rakes and other old mine waste material disposals.
2. Complete ongoing investigations of the National Park's archaeological features and focus on measures to protect cultural heritage for the future.
3. Prepare woodland action plans covering issues such as woodland biodiversity, landscape conservation and the promotion of local species and stock as integral parts of the action plan considerations.
4. Allow extensions of existing mineral workings only to meet essential national need if these are not available elsewhere, or provide traditional building materials for the need in the National Park.
5. Try hard in finding efficient ways to reduce recreational visitor's use of private vehicles, improve public transport and encourage use of rail for freight transport.

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APPENDICES

1. Summary of visit topics
2. Resolution (96) 24 of the Committee of Ministers 1996
3. Map of the Diploma area and surroundings
4. Map of Protected Areas
5. Map of Access Areas and Public Rights of Way

APPENDIX I

APPENDIX II

A P P E N D I X III

Map – Transport Study Area

A P P E N D I X I V

APPENDIX V

A P P E N D I X VI**DRAFT RESOLUTION****on the Renewal of the European Diploma awarded to the
Peak District National Park (United Kingdom)**

The Committee of Ministers, under terms of Article 15.a. of the Statute of the Council of Europe;

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma, as amended by Resolution (98) 29 on the Regulations for the European Diploma of Protected Areas;

Having regard to Resolution (66) 22 awarding the European Diploma to the Peak District National Park;

Having regard to the proposals of the Committee for the Activities of the Council of Europe in the field of Biological and Landscape Diversity (CO-DBP);

Bearing in mind the consultant's report submitted to the Group of Specialists for the European Diploma of Protected Areas at its meeting on 1st and 2 March 2001;

Renews the European Diploma awarded to the Peak District National Park until 28 March 2006;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

Recommendations

1. As soon as possible stop further loss of important key conservation habitats in farmland, especially hay meadows, wetlands, limestone heaths and remaining areas of lead mine rakes and other old mine waste material disposals.
2. Complete ongoing investigations of the National Park's archaeological features and focus on measures to protect cultural heritage for the future.
3. Prepare woodland action plans covering issues such as woodland biodiversity, landscape conservation and the promotion of local species and stock as integral parts of the action plan considerations.
4. Allow extensions of existing mineral workings only to meet essential national need if these are not available elsewhere, or provide traditional building materials for the need in the National Park.
5. Try hard in finding efficient ways to reduce recreational visitors' use of private vehicles, improve public transport and encourage use of rail for freight transport.