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Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas

Council of Europe, Palais, Room 16

20-21 February 2024

APPRAISAL REPORT RENEWAL 2024 Peak District National Park (United Kingdom)

24-25 October 2023

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INTRODUCTION

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, by means of its Resolution (66) 22, awarded the European Diploma for Protected Areas to Peak District National Park at its meeting of 29 March 1966. The deadline established for its renewal was 28 March 1971. The Diploma has been further renewed in 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, and 2011. The last renewal (Resolution CM/ResDip(2011) 11) extended the award for a period of 10 years until 28 March 2021. An on-the-spot appraisal with the purpose of examining the possibility of further extending the diploma planned for 2020 had to be postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is why the validity of the Diploma has exceptionally been extended to 2024 (Resolution CM ResDip(2021)3).

With regard to the decision of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas at its meeting on 2-3 March 2023 to perform on-the-spot appraisal visits to areas whose Diplomas were due in 2024, by letters dated on 6 October 2023 Ms Blanca Ramos (Granada, Spain) and Mr Michael Schimek (Tulln, Austria) were invited as independent experts to carry out the visit to Peak District National Park in the United Kingdom from 23 to 26 October 2023. The objectives were to assess "*whether the conditions of the site remain the same as when the Diploma was awarded and extended, or whether they have improved or deteriorated*" and "*to assess whether the conservation of biological, geological or landscape diversity which was put forward at the time of the award of the European Diploma for Protected Areas to the area is still of exceptional European interest and can consequently motivate the renewal of its European Diploma*".

The appraisal visit took place from 24 to 25 October 2023. The two experts were accompanied by Mr Rhodri Thomas (Natural Environment Team Manager). During the visit, the following persons were met:

24 October:

8.45 a.m.	Short briefing at Peak District National Park office with Mr Phil Mulligan (CEO) and Ms Suzanne Fletcher (Head of Landscape & Engagement)
9.30 a.m.	Along with Ms Sarah Bird (PDNPA Nature Recovery Officer), meeting with the local farmer Mr Tom Mills at his property Bubnell Cliff Farm, to show his experience as cooperation partner of PDNP, on agri-environmental schemes and farming in the National Park
11.15 a.m.	Meeting with Mr Andy Farmer (National Park Ranger) at Monsal Head, on visitor management and access to the National Park
12.30 a.m.	Meeting with Ms Rachael Lyon (PDNP Engagement Manager) during lunch at Hassop Café, on community and youth involvement issues
1.30 p.m.	Meeting with Mr Joe Alsop (Natural England) at Cressbrook Dale, Ravensdale, and Lathkill Dale, on limestone dale management, fighting ash dieback and re-shaping forests, and the conflict between former mining activities and the water management in the River Lathkill

25 October:

10 a.m.	Meeting with Mr Chris Dean (Project Manager of Moors for the Future Project) at Snailsden Moor, on efforts to re-create ecologically functioning moorlands in connection with the drinking water reservoirs in the park
1 p.m.	Meeting with Mr Rob Meetham (landscape advisor to PDNP) at Dunford Bridge, on

undergrounding electricity lines

3.45 p.m. Meeting with Mr Andy Gillings (Director at Peak District Mines Historical Society) at Magpie Mine, on keeping up historic mining facilities

4.30 p.m. Wrap-up discussion at Peak District National Park office with Mr Ken Smith (National Park Chair), Mr Phil Mulligan (CEO), and Ms Suzanne Fletcher (Head of Landscape & Engagement)

A big thank you goes out to all the people we met, and particularly Mr Rhodri Thomas, who perfectly organised the whole appraisal visit and drove us safely through the park to all the meetings, and Ms Anne Badcock (Head of Cultural Heritage), who accompanied us on day two of the visit.

The itinerary of the visit, as it had been previously agreed upon between the site management and the experts, is attached as Annex I to this report.

I - BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK

Peak District National Park was established in 1951 as the very first national park in Great Britain. It comprises the rural areas along the southern edge of the Pennines between the major urban centres of Manchester and Sheffield and stretches over parts of the counties of Derbyshire, Cheshire, Staffordshire, Greater Manchester, and Yorkshire.

Its main physical features are as follows:

- Surface area: 1,438 km²
- Perimeter: about 63 km from north to south, about 38 km from west to east
- Maximum elevation: 636 m

Despite its name, Peak District doesn't feature many sharp edges and peaks, but a rather smooth landscape with rolling hills, mostly located above 300 m of sea level. It features two rather distinct larger landscape units:

- The "White Peak" in the south, a largely agriculturally used limestone plateau with the characteristic dry-stone walls separating the different patches of agricultural land. The plateau is frequently intersected by the so-called limestone dales, rather sharp and reasonable deep valleys carving through the limestone rock, featuring valuable dry meadow habitats on the sunny slopes and close-to-natural forests in the narrower and shadier parts.
- The "Dark Peak" in the north and to the west and east, encircling the White Peak in a horseshoe-like shape. It features vast moorlands on gritstone and is less densely populated than the White Peak. The moorlands serve as important drinking water reservoirs for the urban centres lying around the park. Natural England has recently identified a third unit, called South West Peak, with intermediate characteristics of the other two (see section II.2).

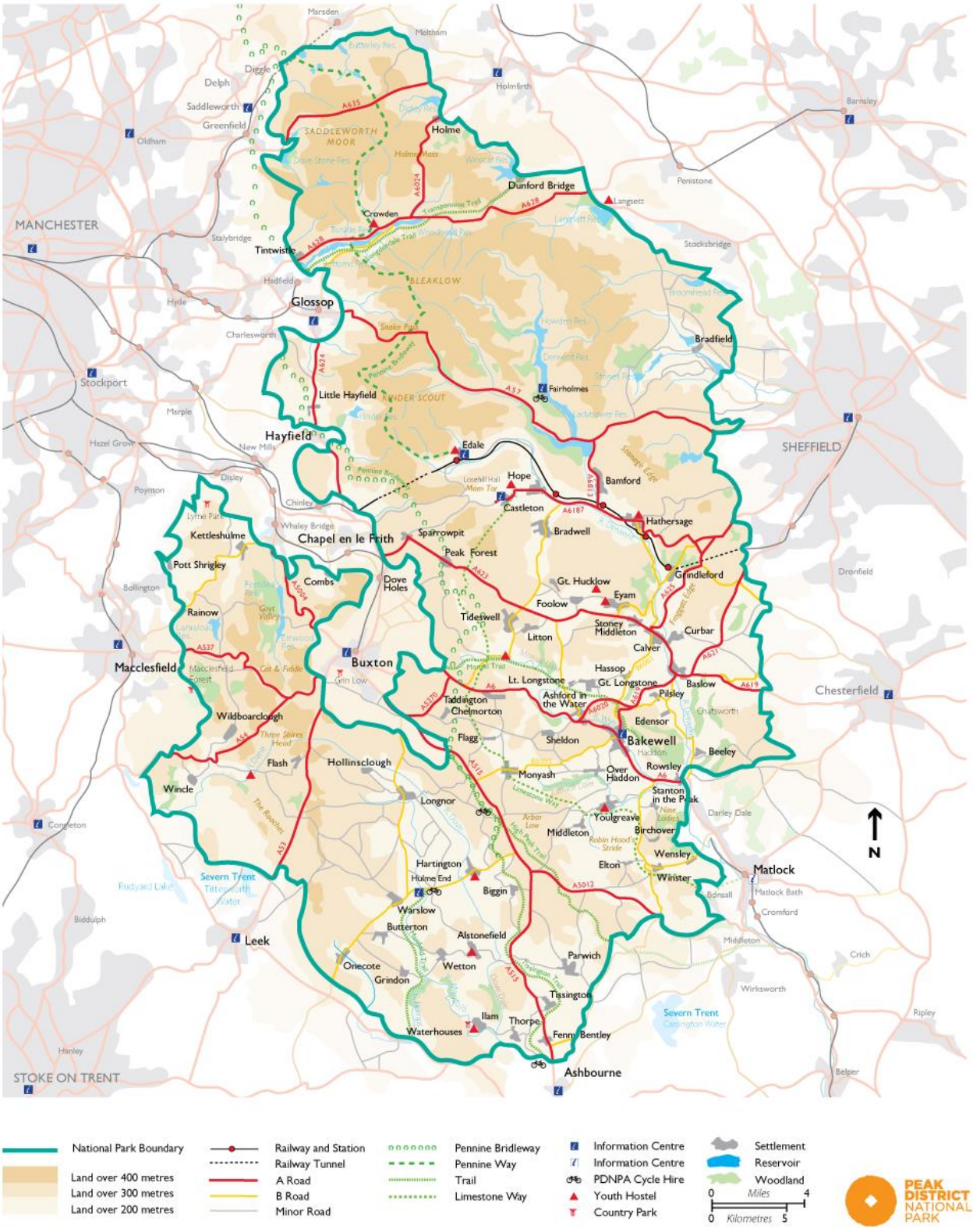
The population inside the park lies around 37,000 people and has stayed rather constant during the last years (a reduction of 3 % since 1991).[1] The largest town is Bakewell, with about 3,700 inhabitants. The administrative centre of the park, Aldern House, is also located in Bakewell. The rest of the people lives in smaller villages featuring typical English houses made of local materials in a park-like landscape and 109 conservation areas. The colour of the houses mostly reflects their location either in the White Peak area (white limestone) or the Dark Peak (grey gritstone).

Despite its rural character, Peak District National Park lies in the middle of the heavily populated and urbanised regions of the English Midlands, in Northern England. About 20 million people live within an hour driving distance from the park. The number of people visiting the park annually is estimated at about 13.25 million. Thus, the park has an important welfare function to the people of Northern England.

About a third of the park area (35 %) is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) from a nature protection perspective. Most of these areas are privately owned but accessible to the public. There are 2,900 listed buildings and more than 450 highly protected scheduled historic monuments.[2]

[1] https://reports.peakdistrict.gov.uk/sotpr/docs/settlement-&-communities/resident-population.html

[2] Many of the facts mentioned may be found at https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/learning-about/news/mediacentrefacts


Marsden
Meltham
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Saddleworth
Greenfield
Oldham
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Langsett
MANCHESTER
Crowden
Stalybridge
Tintwistle
Stocksbridge
Hadfield
BLEAKLOW
Glossop
Hyde
Charlesworth
Bradfield
Stockport
Little Hayfield
KINDER SCOUT
Fairholmes
Marple
Hayfield
Hazel Grove
New Mills
Edale
SHEFFIELD
Disley
Hope
Bamford
Poynton
Chinley
Castleton
Hathersage
Whaley Bridge
Kettleshulme
Chapel en le Frith
Sparrowpit
Bradwell
Peak Forest
Pott Shrigley
Grindleford
Bollington
Combs
Dove Holes
Gt. Hucklow
Eyam
Dronfield
Rainow
Foolow
Tideswell
Stoney Middleton
Curbar
Litton
Calver
Macclesfield
Buxton
Hassop
Gt. Longstone
Baslow
Chesterfield
Lt. Longstone
Pilsley
Taddington
Chelmorton
Ashford in the Water
Chatsworth
Wildboarclough
Edensor
Bakewell
Flagg
Sheldon
Beeley
Flash
Hollinsclough
Monyash
Over Haddon
Rowsley
Wincle
Stanton in the Peak
Longnor
Youlgreave
Darley Dale
Middleton
Birchover
Congleton
Wensley
Hartington
Elton
Matlock
Severn Trent
Tittesworth Water
Hulme End
Biggin
Winster
Rudyard Lake
Matlock Bath
Bonsall
Warslow
Cromford
Biddulph
Butterton
Alstonefield
Leek
Parwich
Onecote
Wetton
Grindon
Middleton
Crich
Tissington
Wirksworth
Severn Trent
Carsington Water
Ilam
Thorpe
Ripley
Waterhouses
Fenny Bentley
Hanley
STOKE ON TRENT
Ashbourne
Belper
N
National Park Boundary
Land over 400 metres
Land over 300 metres
Land over 200 metres
Railway and Station
Railway Tunnel
A Road
B Road
Minor Road
Pennine Bridleway
Pennine Way
Trail
Limestone Way
Information Centre
Information Centre
PDNPA Cycle Hire
Youth Hostel
Country Park
Settlement
Reservoir
Woodland
0 Miles 4
0 Kilometres 5
PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK

II - EUROPEAN INTEREST OF THE SITE

The National Parks in the UK were created in 1949 by virtue of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, as venues for escape, enjoyment, and recreation of the people. This law was enacted in response to citizen protests and demands for the public access to wild nature. Peak District was the first National Park declared for this purpose, in 1951. For that reason, the National Parks in the UK have a different profile compared to those in other countries. They have actually been classified by IUCN as Category V, equivalent to Nature Park or protected landscape, instead of category II (National Park).

The Peak District National Park Management Plan identifies the following "special qualities", of undoubted European interest:

1. Beautiful views created by contrasting landscapes and dramatic geology.
2. Internationally important and locally distinctive wildlife and habitats.
3. Undeveloped places of tranquillity and dark night skies within reach of millions.
4. Landscapes that tell a story of thousands of years of people, farming, and industry.
5. Characteristic settlements with strong communities and traditions.
6. An inspiring space for escape, adventure, discovery, and quiet reflection.
7. Vital benefits for millions of people that flow beyond the landscape boundary.

The summarised description of the ecological assets refers to a great extent to the document "State of Nature in the Peak District"[3], provided by the Peak District National Park Authority.

II-1. - Fauna

In previous appraisal reports, not many details on fauna were provided. Only imprecise references to the low population levels of Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus* subsp. *scotica*) and Black Grouse (*Lyrurus tetrix*) were mentioned, mainly because of their interest as game species. The Peak District population of Black Grouse, historically extremely low, used to be the southernmost one of its geographic range in the UK. Unfortunately, the species became extinct in recent years. In section III-4 this issue is dealt with in more detail.

Apart from these two highlight species, birds of prey may be the best-known group of fauna. Worth mentioning is the recovery of the Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*), which may be seen again in Peak District thanks to the national programme of reintroduction. Among the breeding raptor species, the following may be mentioned: peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*), merlin (*Falco columbarius*), goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) and hen harrier (C*ircus cyaneus*), the latter in low numbers. Since 2011 they are being monitored in the framework of the project "Peak District Bird of Prey Initiative", handled by conservation and land-management organisations and the public authorities aiming at recovering them to their population levels of 1990.[4]

Other important bird species worth mentioning are the ring ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*), curlew (*Numenius arquata*), dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*), lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), twite (*Carduelis flavirostris*), skylark

[3] Penny Anderson, 2016

[4] More info at: https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0028/415459/Bird-of-Prey-Initiative-2021-final-report.pdf

(*Alauda arvensis*), meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*), tree pipit (*Anthus trivialis*), wheatear (*Oenanthe sp.*), redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*), whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*), green woodpecker (*Picus viridis*), wood warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*) and pied flycatcher (*Ficedula hypoleuca*).

Among the mammals, the mountain hare (*Lepus timidus*) lives in heathlands and moors. The brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) and the rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) are frequent. The red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) and the pine marten (*Martes martes*) occurred previously in Peak District woodlands, although at present they have practically disappeared. The otter (*Lutra lutra*) and the polecat (*Mustela putorius*) occur in low numbers, and the badger (*Meles meles*), stoat (*Mustela erminea*), and weasel (*Mustela nivalis*) are common. Among the ungulates, the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) and the roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), formerly widespread, became extinct in the 18th century. At present they are reoccupying their old realm, probably, in the case of Red Deer, from escaped parkland deer.

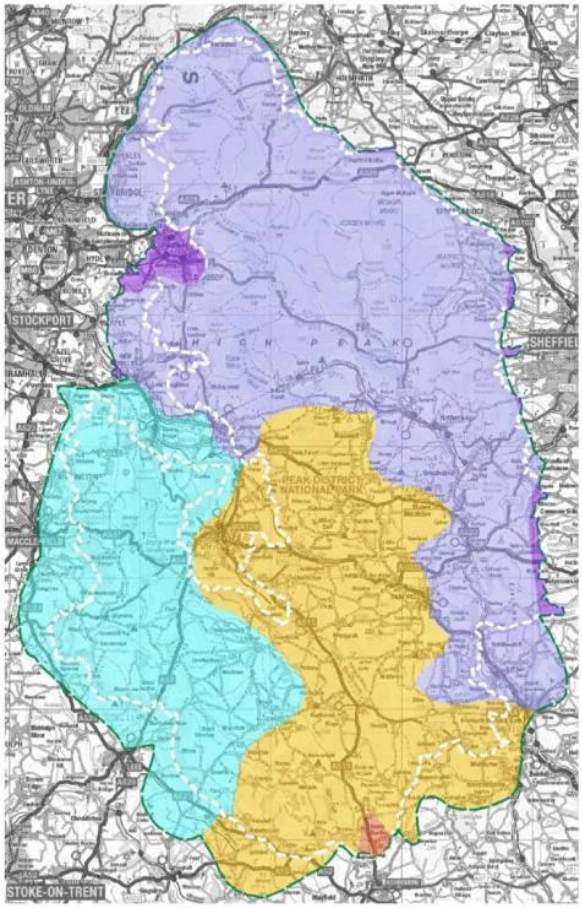
Beavers (*Castor fiber*) have been extinct in the Peak District for several centuries. The feasibility of reintroducing a population to the eastern Peak District Moors is currently being investigated by a partnership of organisations.

Within the group of reptiles, the adder (*Vipera berus*) and the common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) may be found at the moorlands.

II-2. - Flora and vegetation

Natural England has defined a list of 159 National Character Areas (NCA) for all of England, with specific profiles. As already mentioned, Peak District features three of those NCAs, mainly based on the geological substrate:

- The millstone grit in the Dark Peak (lilac in the picture) at the north (NCA #51).
- The rolling limestone plateau of the White Peak (yellow in the picture) in the south (NCA #52).
- The so-called South West Peak in the west (pale blue in the picture), which is a mixed mosaic landscape (NCA #53).



Valuable wild habitats are more continuous and extensive in the Dark Peak and to a lesser extent in the South West Peak, whereas in the White Peak the area of protected habitats is much more restricted to the limestone dales with grassland and ash woodland.

The dominant vegetation of the Dark Peak, along with the South West Peak, is a combination of blanket bog with *Sphagnum* moss, crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) and other dwarf shrubs like bilberry, cowberry or cranberry (*Vaccinium spp*.), heather moorland (*Calluna* spp.), purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*), bog rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), bog asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and cottongrass (*Eriophorum* spp.), forming the striking landscape of the moors, with scattered patches of flower-rich meadows, woodlands and wetlands.

The White Peak is more characterised by limestone grasslands of perennial herbaceous plants like *Festuca* and *Agrostis*, with ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and mossy saxifrage (*Saxifraga hypnoides*) in the valleys and dales.

Woodlands are, in general, of limited extension in the Peak District National Park, which has many areas unsuitable for them, partly due to the extensive coverage by peatlands or to the sulphur dioxide pollution over the last 200 years. Among the main types of woodlands, the dominant one used to be the upland oak woodland with *Quercus petraea,* birch *(Fagus sylvatica*) and accompanying brushes. In valleys, on steep limestone slopes and in the dales, upland mix ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) woods and wet woodland with *Salix, Alnus* and *Betula* can be found. Many areas have, some of them a long time ago, been reforested mainly with scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), spruce (*Abies sp*.) and broad-leaved species, with a good potential to become semi-natural woods.

A high proportion of the territory is covered by grasslands of different types. Some of them are ecologically very valuable, like the acid grasslands (the most extensive, with more than 8,600 ha mapped) as excellent habitat for meadow pipits and larks, the basic prey of small raptors. To a large extent, grasslands are used for agriculture and/or sheep and bovine livestock grazing. Depending on the degree of intensification, they can be more or less interesting for wild species and habitats.

A very particular type of grassland existing at the Peak District National Park are the so-called “lead rakes”. The former lead mining sites feature landscape dimples, scattered masses and hummocks made up by abandoned mining wastes rich in lead and other metals (chromium, copper, cadmium). They have become sites of ecological interest since some rare plants adapted to metallic soils grow there and nowhere else. This particular habitat type is in Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive as “6130 Calaminarian grasslands”. Although EU legislation on Natura 2000 is no longer valid in the UK, Natura 2000 rules are still applied nationally in the UK, and the habitat types identified are of undeniable European interest. The authorities consider that the recreation of these grasslands is virtually impossible, even by human intervention. The most adequate strategy is to conserve the existing ones and, where possible, promote connecting them with other flower-rich grasslands.

Lead rakes

Other wetlands (apart from those existing in other natural systems like the peatlands) are also of great interest. Ponds, rivers and streams and artificial reservoirs are in some cases of great historical and heritage value, and are also of importance for the biodiversity, although many of them need restoration and others have been occupied by invasive alien species, creating a priority conservation challenge.

Many inventory, scientific and monitoring initiatives have been adopted for wild species and habitats during the recent years in order to assess their contribution to the biodiversity and recreation, their state of conservation and functions. This is an essential knowledge for decision making and for drafting necessary management and restoration measures, projects, and strategies.

II-3. - Exploitation of resources

The Peak District National Park has traditionally been shaped by three main kinds of exploitation:

1. **Agriculture and husbandry**. The landscape has been, particularly in the White Peak, transformed to agricultural land with sheep and bovine livestock for the production of meat and dairy. Some of the farms raise local breeds, like longhorn cattle, well adapted to the climate and the territory.

2. **Mining**, with two main products:
   a. Lead deposits are relatively widespread in veins located close to the surface. Shallow tunnels were dug in the past to extract the ore, leaving characteristic rippled reliefs and dimples in the surface.
   b. Rocks were commonly used for traditional construction. Limestone (in the White Peak) and gritstone (in the Dark Peak) were extracted in numerous quarries. Particularly significant is the cultural background of millstones produced and used in this area since the 11th century. The logo of the National Park shows a millstone as well.
3. **Water supply**. The abundance of water, particularly in the Dark Peak, attracted the public water supply services to the catchment areas to provide water resources to the surrounding cities and villages. Many of these areas are owned and managed by these organisations.

II-4 European Interest justifying the Diploma

The European Diploma for Protected Areas, awarded in 1966, recognised the importance of the site as a "*fine landscape which, in spite of relatively heavy human settlement from the Neolithic times onwards, retains large areas of uncultivated semi-natural woodland and moor*". At that time, the estimated population within 60 miles around its borders were 16 million people, most of them living in two industrial agglomerations: Manchester to the west and Sheffield and other larger cities to the east. Peak District National Park became a major recreational resource within *the largest concentration of people in the industrial region of the English Midlands* (L.E. Esping, 1970). The European Diploma was awarded under category C, *which combines the social and recreational functions of the area with the safeguard of its biological and aesthetic features, the overall aim being to conserve an environment of quality* (H. Lethier, 1996).

The assessment of the European Diploma to Peak District National Park recognises the sophisticated management solutions implemented by the managers to comply with multiple demands required by the high human pressure in this protected area. Peak District National Park is well known as a peculiar area where different motivations, sometimes contradictory, are met by implementing smart measures, programmes, and strategies to satisfy the needs of a wide range of actors. Even if at the earliest times after its declaration the main management drivers mainly focused on outdoor recreation for the public, it is nonetheless true that the interest, the effort and the scientific research for the conservation of the wild species, their habitats and ecosystem services have been and still are progressively rising since then.

Apart from these general considerations, other particular issues must be mentioned to highlight the European interest justifying the Diploma. Based on the current knowledge available, the most relevant may be the following:

1. The importance of the ecological values for nature conservation: The surface area occupied by the blanket bogs in England is estimated at 215,000 ha. Nearly 26,000 of them (approx. 12 %) lie in Peak District National Park. This gives a clear idea of the great importance of this protected area for the conservation of this priority habitat type and associated peatlands.
2. The occurrence of species of great European interest, like black grouse, red grouse of the Scottish subspecies, mountain hare, adder, red kites from the national reintroduction project, passerines like twite (*Carduelis flavirrostris*) and others (see section II.1), endemic flora species like leek-coloured hawkweed (*Hieracium subprasinifolium*), recently re-discovered, habitat types poorly represented, probably by lack of information, like the waxcap grasslands (see section III.4.5)
3. The crucial role of peatland and forest ecosystems as natural storage facilities for CO_2 and other greenhouse gases. Under the current scenario of climate change, it is extremely relevant to underline the key function of healthy blanket bogs and woodlands for this important task of our times.
4. The ecosystem services provided, like supply of clean water, fresh air, spiritual relief, welfare, education, etc.
5. The imaginative solutions implemented by the managers to meet very opposing and often contradictory demands from different actors and partners, while maintaining the ecological, recreational and scenic character and restoring elements affected by long-term impacts.
6. The important role for the recreation, enjoyment and education for millions of visitors that annually stay in the park for one or two days or spend their holidays in the region, providing a valuable source of income for the local economy.

III - CONSERVATION MEASURES

III.1 - Legal protection status

National Parks in Great Britain are regulated by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Peak District National Park was the first of the currently 15 National Parks in Britain to be established, already in 1951.

The long tradition of Peak District National Park is one of the reasons why the National Park is not a wilderness area like many other (to some extent younger) National Parks worldwide, but is categorised as IUCN Category V[5] (protected landscape or seascape[6]). This makes sense given the fact that almost all of the National Park relies on human intervention to keep up its specific assets, both in terms of protecting the landscape and valuable habitats.

III.2 - Boundaries/zoning/buffer zones

The National Park only consists of the property and has no buffer zones. In addition to the designation of specific natural and cultural protection areas (Special Protection Areas, Special Area of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Scheduled Ancient Monuments), the National Park Authority has identified the wilder landscapes of the moorlands, woodlands and limestone dales as the "Natural Zone", where development is only accepted in exceptional circumstances. When the national park was established, the urban and partially industrialised areas of Buxton, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Hayfield, and Glossop were deliberately left out of the park boundaries since they would not have contributed to the protective goals of the park.

A change in boundaries or the establishment of buffer zones is now, after more than 70 years of existence of the park, not foreseen and would not make sense either.

III.3 - Supervision and warding

The National Park Administration can make use of more than 70 years of experience and has developed a way which allows them to take care of all relevant tasks appropriately.

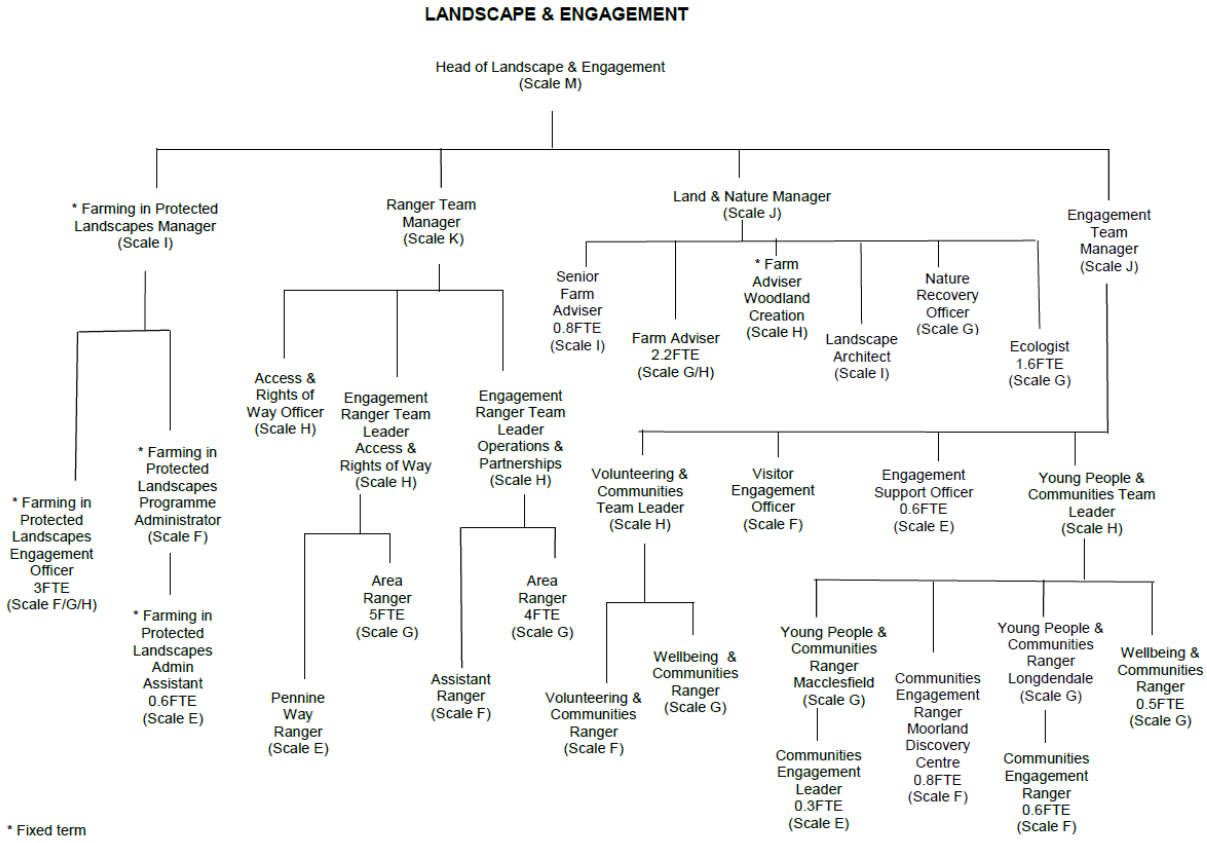
Since the National Park has been in place for such a long time already, the administration has tied a dense network with lots of other important stakeholders in the area in all relevant fields of work and is widely recognised as the key coordinator and facilitator of a sustainable development within the legal framework of the National Park designation.

The park employs park rangers both with an immediate responsibility to control visitor behaviour in the park itself and for creating commitment for the park and its goals among the local communities and

[5] https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/learning-about/news/70-years-of-the-peak-district-national-park/peak-district-facts

[6] https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/pag-021.pdf

particular groups of visitors, most of all young people. Both the Ranger Team Manager and the Engagement Team Manager are located at the second management level below the CEO.



The ranger team comprises 15 full time equivalents (FTE) and the engagement team 10.8 FTE of staff. Another group of rangers amounting to 9.97 FTE is organised under the visitor experience manager and the rural estate manager in the Assets & Enterprise line.

III.4 - State of conservation of the main species and their habitats

III.4.1 Situation of relevant species

As for bird species of European interest the current situation is uneven. According to the data provided by the Peak District National Park Authority, the general trend of species linked to farmland habitats is decreasing, like in many European wild areas. This is the situation for lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) and partially for skylark (*Alauda arvensis*). For some other species, the peatlands restoration is providing good results, like golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) or curlew (*Numenius arquata*). The situation of twite (*Carduelis flavirostris*) is a matter of concern, owing to its decline and current low numbers. Management of specific species has proven difficult, since a decline of one species may mean the rise of another, because of links in the overall habitat system that are difficult to judge correctly.

Unfortunately, the black grouse (*Lyrurus tetrix*) has become extinct in this area in 2000. The population of Peak District was the southernmost one of the whole UK distribution area of the species which, by the way, shows a decreasing trend across its whole range. Most probably many factors have contributed to

its local extinction. Climate change may have greatly affected a species which occurs in cold climates, particularly at the border of its range and in a latitude where warming can be more intense. The degradation of the moors has probably also played a key role in the local extinction of the black grouse as well as predation and possible changes of its habitat. Severn Trent Water has made an attempt to reintroduce the species in the area with captive-bred chicks, but the result has been negative. For that reason, the initiative has been momentarily postponed until having more information for future attempts of reintroduction and the feasibility of concentrating on the black grouse in relation with other typical species of the park.

In contrast, the local population of red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus* subsp. *scotica*) shows inter-annual fluctuations, but with a stable trend. This is a game species and is subject of a specific management by game keepers, normally to maintain heather in juvenile stages.

As explained in section II.1, the five regularly breeding species of birds of prey are being monitored since 2011, to obtain basic information to promote their recovery to the levels of 1990. The population targets established have not yet been achieved, and it seems that the illegal persecution of raptors continues, being probably one of the factors preventing their recovery. The hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) shows very low numbers and thus is quite vulnerable to stochastic events. However, the recent breeding success in consecutive years (2021 Annual Report to the CoE) allows being relatively optimistic. The red kite (*Milvus milvus*) has successfully bred for two consecutive years, too, supported by a general trend of recovery of the species in the UK.

The mountain hare (*Lepus timidus*) was reintroduced in the Dark Peak in the late 19th century, being at the moment the only place where it occurs in England. Besides being an Annex V species of the Habitats Directive, it is a priority species within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Its population level seems to be stable, for the moment.

Some species of carnivores, like the pine marten (*Martes martes*), the polecat (*Mustela putorius*), and the otter (*Lutra lutra*), formerly widespread, occur at very low numbers at present. The red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) has been progressively declining until its disappearance in 2000.

The endemic leek-coloured hawkweed (*Hieracium subprasinifolium*) (fam. *Asteraceae*), thought to be extinct, has recently been re-discovered in Dovedale.

Many vascular plants have improved their situation owing to the restoration of moorlands, reduced grazing and the general reduction of sulphur dioxide pollution and consequent decrease of soil acidity.

III.4.2 Situation of the moorlands

The state of conservation of the moorlands deserves a more detailed consideration. The Peak District National Park is located in the middle of an area of great urban development and in between two big and highly industrialised cities, Manchester and Sheffield. The air pollution, mainly sulphur dioxide, produced by these industries since the industrial revolution has been falling over the natural ecosystem, increasing the acidity of soils and particularly affecting the moors of the Dark and the South West Peaks. Along with wildfires, managed burning, overgrazing and trampling, pollution has contributed to the extensive deterioration of these ecosystems. Water runoff has also been affected since dissolved organic carbon is washed out, staining the water and making the treatment to obtain good drinking standards to the urban water supply services more difficult and expensive. Another consequence of the mentioned factors is that erosion and water drainage increases, huge amounts of peat are washed off, the system becomes drier and the most sensitive species, like *Sphagnum* or cottongrass, become rarer. The whole ecosystem of the moorlands was at the fringe of getting lost. At the same time, heather grew more tightly and turned out to dominate the landscape, since it better resists the dryness and the fire.

At present the air pollution has largely diminished, but the effects from precedent decades still persist. In the 1980s, the National Park authority put in place an ambitious programme for the recovery of the moorlands, investing a huge amount of financial resources, partly supplemented by EU funds (mainly LIFE) and by national resources, but to a large extent financed by the water supply companies who have a key interest in keeping up the ecological functionality of their water catchment areas.

Over the years, the recovery methodology has been tested and adjusted to obtain better results and optimising resource allocation. Since 2003, the project “Moors for the Future Partnership” is underway, implementing and further optimising the knowledge and experience gained during previous years:

- As a first step, the remaining peat was stabilised by actively planting heather vegetation and even supporting its upgrowth by using a limited amount of fertilisers.
- Currently, the gullies formed by erosion are treated to reduce the runoff speed, either by transverse dikes of stones (that must be brought in by helicopter) or creating small dams using local materials, allowing the siltation of the sediments carried by the water and the recovery of soil.
- In addition to that, healthy typical moorland vegetation, particularly *Sphagnum*, is brought from nearby areas to provide bank seeds and distributed across the treated areas to stimulate new plants to grow up and cover the surface in process of recovery.

Over the years, the Partnership has raised £ 50 million of investment and delivered restoration to over 35 km² of bare and eroding peat.

Open moorlands with erosion gullies

Agricultural collection balls containing heather vegetation to be brought out on the moorland

A stone dike against the erosion of blanket bogs (Photo: Anna Badcock PDNPA)

A heather bale dam (Photo: Anna Badcock PDNPA)

A stone dam in process of coverage by grass (Photo: Anna Badcock PDNPA)

Formerly bare peatlands years after treatment (Photo: Anna Badcock PDNPA)

III.4.3 Situation of the limestone dales

Most of the White Peak is used for agricultural purposes. The limestone plateau is at some spots intersected by fairly deep valley, the so-called limestone dales.

A limestone dale, with farming right until the fringe of the dale and some lead rakes in the centre

The shallow soils on the slopes of the dales feature a rich diversity of thermophilic flora and fauna. Like at other similar places, this biological diversity relies on constant caretaking. Without human intervention, the dale slopes would grow over with shrubs and other vegetation, causing the biological diversity to slowly disappear.

Grazing in the dales has proven to be ideally done by a local breed of cattle which may be kept outdoors all year round. Normal dairy cattle are too big for the steep slopes, creating erosion problems, and may not be kept outdoors all year round. Sheep, on the other hand, create a grass cover too much like on golf courses, which is not desirable from a nature conservation point of view either. The cattle are taken care of, ideally, by local farmers who can apply for agri-environmental grants for doing the job. Since it has proven that it is not always easy to find farmers who are willing to cooperate, the National Park now owns a certain number of those cattle as well.

Another issue is that extensive farming often is done right until the fringe of the flatter areas around the dales. The dale management is, therefore, trying to create kind of a buffer zone close to the dales where farming is done in a less extensive way, partly by supporting farmers to acquire agri-environmental funds for this purpose, too.

In narrower parts of the dales, which are mostly covered by woodland, the dale management tries to manage the forests in a closer-to-natural way. For challenges about that plan see the next part.

III.4.4 Situation of the ash tree woodlands

The ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) needs fresh and wet soils. In Peak District, it grows mainly in shady valleys where it may become fairly tall. In recent years, a new disease is severely affecting these woodlands, the so-called ash-dieback. The disease is caused by the fungus *Hymenosciphus fraxineus*, native from Asia. As the contagion is airborne, this is a density-dependent disease: the denser the canopy is, the more likely it is that trees get infected.

Ash dieback has occurred in other European countries some years before it now hit England. For that reason, Natural England teamed up with partners in other European countries to obtain information on the disease and how to tackle it. It also submitted one of the last grant proposals in the UK still to be financed by EU LIFE funds.

As a preparatory step, Natural England created a "Risk Assessing for the Likely Loss of Ash" on the pilot site at Ravensdale, a property owned and managed by this authority. A GIS map was produced to help monitoring the situation. As at other sites, Natural England is trying to detect ash trees that are, for whatever reason, resistant against the disease in order to actively reproduce these trees. At the same time, infected trees are cut out from the forest to minimize the further spreading of the disease. In steep slopes, where the ash should not be as present as it currently is, anyway, other more adapted trees are planted instead of the cut-out ash. This is done with the help of specialised forestry staff with mountaineering skills.

Part of the pilot site in Ravensdale

III.4.5 Other relevant assets

One of the most unknown ecological units is the waxcap grassland, an assemblage of grasses and fungi on nutrient-poor soils. Recent studies and surveys have shown that Peak District has nationally and internationally important sites. Some of them are of great value, either for the diversity of fungal species or for their rarity. The waxcap grasslands can be found on undisturbed soils and admit some low-impact management like sheep grazing or mowing plus grazing. They are quite vulnerable even to minor changes in the management and further studies are needed to understand their ecological requirements. Surveys continue to be carried out, including a-DNA survey of soil samples.

III.5 - Land use planning

Peak District National Park has, like few other protected areas, the legal power to control the spatial development and the conservation of the valuable built environment of the park by its own, since they do not only take care of natural and cultural conservation in the park but also serve as the local planning authority, in charge of both land use planning and issuing building permits.

The results are impressive. As for the villages and towns that were visited or driven through during the on-the-spot appraisal visit, almost no if any signs of urban sprawl could be detected. The typical Northern English townscapes are extremely well-protected, with the outer appearance of the vast majority of the buildings kept in a traditional style and in good shape, and contemporary facilities and interventions, if any, carefully integrated.

At some formerly degraded spots, new public facilities, like parks, have been planned and carefully implemented into the villages, taking into account creating habitats for endangered species. Undergrounding of power lines has continued at some spots, by collaborating with the power line operating companies which contributed to financing the majority of the project costs. Those projects were accompanied by the park's own landscape architecture professionals.

Peak District National Park successfully shows that implementing strict planning and built environment standards does not necessarily have to result in the depopulation of rural communities, since the number of inhabitants has stayed rather constant during the past years. Between June 2008 and December 2019, the Peak District National Park Authority made 8,605 planning decisions. There was a higher approval rate for planning applications within the Peak District National Park (87%) than for England overall (86%). The current evidence demonstrates that, although national parks in England account for only a small proportion of the overall regional and national economy, protected landscapes support substantial levels of economic activity and perform relatively well against key economic indicators such as rates of employment and self-employment.[7]

[7] https://reports.peakdistrict.gov.uk/sotpr/docs/settlement-&-communities/local-rural-economy.html

The town centre of Bakewell

IV - MANAGEMENT

IV.1 - Management Plan

The National Park administration has recently reviewed the National Park Management Plan 2018-23 and issued a new very ambitious plan for 2023 to 2028, including visions for the period of time until 2043.

Vision: By 2043 the Peak District National Park is exemplary in its response to climate change and nature recovery. Its special qualities and resilience as a living landscape have been significantly enhanced. It is a welcoming place where all are inspired to care and communities thrive.[8]

The plan follows four generals aims which are each refined into 2 or 3 specific objectives:[9]

- *Aim one: Climate Change. The Peak District National Park is more resilient and net-zero by 2040 through its exemplary response to climate change.*
- *Aim two: Landscape and Nature Recovery. The Peak District National Park is a resilient landscape in which nature, beauty, and cultural heritage are significantly enhanced.*
- *Aim three: Welcoming Place. The Peak District is a welcoming place where all are inspired to enjoy, care for and connect to its special qualities.*
- *Aim four: Thriving Communities. Peak District National Park communities are thriving and sustainable places where all generations can live healthy and fulfilled lives.*

These four aims are a little more general compared to the six areas of impact mentioned in the predecessor management plan[10], but do not leave out any of the previously agreed topics that are of significance for the National Park management. In the case of aim one, its objectives represent a broader approach to this very important issue of our times compared to the Management Plan 2018-23.

For its implementation, the plan lists a total of 49 actions in its delivery plan to be taken[11]. Some of them are rather specific, whereas many of them include the development of additional strategies and detailed plans based on the aims and objectives. For all actions, a list of key delivery partners is documented, showing the complexity of the stakeholder network collaborating in managing the site together with the National Park administration. For some of the actions planned, the plan mentions more than 10 or sometimes even 15 organizations or groups of partners as key delivery partners.

IV.2 - Institutional responsibility

The Peak District National Park Authority coordinates all relevant actions around the conservation and development of the National Park area in alignment with their legal tasks as laid out in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and its successor laws.

The park is in the special situation that they are not only responsible for nature conservation and enhancement, but also for cultural heritage conservation and local planning. This is why the Peak District

[8] Management plan 2023-28, p. 9

[9] Management plan 2023-28, pp. 10-17

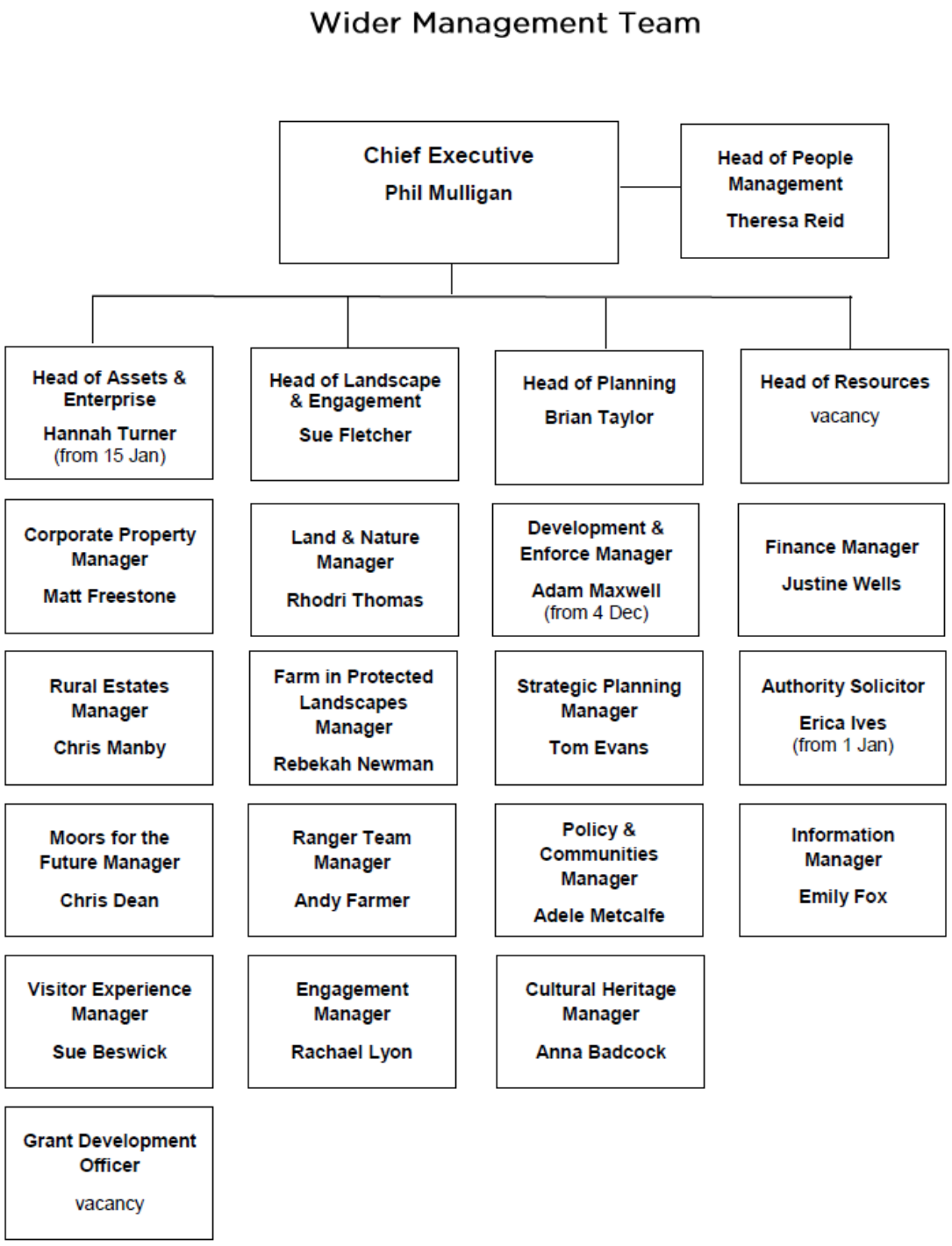
[10] cf. Peak District National Park Management Plan 2018-23, Overall Progress Report

[11] Management plan 2023-28, Appendix 1

National Park Authority can address all relevant issues of protected area maintenance in a way that probably few other protected area authorities may do.

IV.3 - Capacities

Because of the financial situation, the wider management team of Peak District National Park was re-organised into four main lines under the CEO of the park.



The CEO position, the people office, and four main lines under the CEO are staffed as follows:

CEO and People	**Full Time Equivalents**
CEO	1
People	5.32
TOTAL	**6.32**

Assets & Enterprise	**Full Time Equivalents**
Head of the department	1
Visitor experience (incl. visitor centres, bike hire, retail and merchandise)	20.4
Corporate property	16.676
Rural estate management (incl. surveyors)	4
Moors for the Future	25.6
Grant development	1
TOTAL	**68.676**

Landscape & Engagement	**Full Time Equivalents**
Head of the department	1
Farming in protected landscapes	5.6
Rangers	15
Land & Nature	8.6
Engagement	11
TOTAL	**41.2**

Planning	**Full Time Equivalents**
Head of the department	1
Cultural heritage	6.7
Policy & Communities (incl. transport issues)	5
Strategic planning (incl. mineral extraction)	4.8
Development & Enforcement (planning authority)	23
TOTAL	**40.5**

Resources	**Full Time Equivalents**
Head of the department	1
Financial management	5
Information (incl. marketing, IT, customer & democratic support)	32.45
Authority solicitor & monitoring	5.3
TOTAL	**43.75**

The total number of planned staff of the National Park amounts to slightly above 200 full time equivalents, as of the end of 2023. About a fifth of the staff work for the local planning authority, including cultural heritage management. More than two fifth of the staff work for nature conservation and the real estate owned by the park (corporate property, rural estate management, moors for the future, landscape & engagement). Almost another fifth of the staff work for visitor experience and customer & democratic support. Less than a fifth of the staff work for general management and overhead tasks. Vacancies happen from time to time but are generally speaking rather quickly replaced.

As typical for Great Britain, the National Park Authority can rely on a reasonable number of private people actively participating in supervising, conservation, and advocacy, and additional financial resources from private donors.

IV.4 - Budget

The total budget of the National Park administration is made up by the annual government grant from the UK government, own income generated, and other sources, like private donations.

The annual government grant for the National Park amounted to about 6.7 million GBP in 2019/20 and has not been raised since then, despite the inflation having taken place during the last few years, except for a one-off additional grant of 440,000 GBP for 2022/23.This means that the government grant has been reduced by 40 % in real value compared to 2010. This has led to the situation that the National Park administration cannot cover the annual fixed costs of the administration from the government grant anymore, which is highly problematic.

The National Park management has reacted to this situation by redesigning its staff structure and reduced the director positions under the CEO in order to save staff costs. In addition to that, the management intended to lay down the seven visitor centres of the park (which cover about a tenth of the total staff employed by the park), which may not be run in a cost-covering way and have lost importance in the age of digitalisation. For the next three years, though, they may be financed by money from a private donor who stepped in for the government.

As for specific projects, their financing was, unfortunately, massively altered by Brexit, though this does not necessarily mean that specific projects are under jeopardy at least for the moment:

- The formerly EU financed agri-environmental schemes were in the meantime replaced by a nationally financed UK government grant scheme. As discussed during the on-the-spot appraisal, these national grant schemes are at least not worse than the ones formerly drafted in Brussels but maybe, to some extent, more goal-oriented than the grants at stake in the European Union. Like with EU grants, the UK government aims at replacing fixed area premiums with a bonus system for welfare production by farmers, like increasing the ecological value of their farmland or adapting farming practices in a more ecologically beneficial way. Like in the EU, the government is facing opposition to those plans from farming lobbyists, though.
- The National Park supplements those national grants with own grant schemes, which are connected to additional advice given to those who apply for those grants.
- Some of the key nature protection projects, like the Moors for the Future project or the Ash Dieback programme, still benefit from EU LIFE projects that were granted straight before the UK left the European Union. The UK government has not provided for any replacement for the EU funded nature protection programmes so far. For the moment, this does not impose an immediate risk for the ongoing projects, since management has proven to be talented in securing additional funding from civil society, but on a medium to long term perspective the lack of UK funding for nature protection might prove crucial if the UK government does not find a way to replace European funds with national funds.

At some of the key projects, the National Park may make use of the situation that natural and cultural heritage conservation has a beneficial effect for public welfare tasks and are therefore at least partly financed by other cooperation partners. The best example for this is that the restoration of moorland ecosystems is not

only crucial to the National Park itself, but also to the drinking water suppliers of the urban centres around the park which use the moorlands as the catchment area for their water reservoirs. An ecologically well-functioning moorland is, therefore, at the same time an important prerequisite for being able to safely guarantee the necessary amounts of high-quality drinking water to millions of people inside and outside the park and provide other essential ecosystem services like carbon sequestration.

IV.5 - Research and Monitoring Programmes

During the last decades, the Peak District National Park has made a progressively increasing effort to improve the scientific basis to endorse decision-making processes for better management and conservation. As a result, the inventories of fauna and flora and other natural and cultural assets are being updated, which requires important scientific work. A recent version of the inventories of fauna and flora species has actually been provided for this assessment.

The scientific information is collected from a diversity of sources. To a great extent, it is a result of monitoring activities linked to the big restoration projects, like the Moors for the Future Partnership or actions for woodland restoration and to tackle ash dieback. For example, the following studies have been undertaken recently:

- Blanket bog hydrology – water table, water flow, rainfall monitoring, dissolved organic carbon and pollutant content – annually (Moors for the Future – data loggers, staff and volunteers).
- Moorland vegetation change – annually (Moors for the Future – volunteers, remote sensing).
- Moorland Bird Survey – a 5-yearly survey of breeding birds across all moorland in the Peak District.
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments – condition surveys (volunteers).
- Peak District Farmsteads – Issues and Responses.[12]

Climate change monitoring receives an important boost from the Peak District Management Plan 2023-2028, which "*sets out how the Park aims to become more resilient as it moves toward the target of net-zero by 2040*". For that purpose, the report "Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment"[13] has been drafted to assess the vulnerability of Peak District National Park to this driver and to promote resources for climate change adaptations. It involves important scientific work to achieve its targets.

Some additional studies have recently been made by the universities of the region, like the following:

- Land cover change – collaborative PhD studentship with Cranfield University and the University of Oxford using Artificial Intelligence to produce land cover maps from remote sensing.[14]
- Collaborative PhD studentship on Landscape Change, with the University of Sheffield.
- Landscape research, with Manchester Metropolitan University.[15]
- Social Landscape Characterisation, with the University of York.[16]

IV.6 - Relationship between the Reserve Administration and other stakeholders

[12] Full text : https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/84228/PDNPA-Farmsteads-Issues-and-Responses-Report-2018-06.pdf

[13] https://reports.peakdistrict.gov.uk/ccva

[14] https://www.mdpi.com/2072-4292/15/22/5277

[15] Full text: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/01426397.2017.1315391

[16] Full article: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13527258.2023.2289424

Like mentioned before, the National Park administration is, generally speaking and compared to other institutions in other countries, well-staffed. Still, in such a complex region where most of the park area is privately owned, also these members of staff have to rely on good cooperation with other authorities, institutions, and private people to a large extent.

Since the park has already been established more than 70 years ago, the cooperation between the park management and other stakeholders had a lot of time to grow and settle and has become an indispensable part of the overall management system.

The park management does not only act as an authority towards the local communities in local planning and as the building authority, they also support private owners, farmers, and businesses in their daily work, giving out National Park grants, and when applying for grants from other sources.

IV.7 - Public services including waste management

The National Park is included into the usual public service systems present in the United Kingdom, like public transport or waste management services. The park takes care of waste collection on important entry points to the park and along trails in the park managed by the park itself. Additional waste collection in the open areas of the park is regularly done by volunteers. Awareness raising programmes lead to the fact that illegal waste dumping inside the park is not much of an issue.

IV.8 - Climate change mitigation

The current management plan 2023-28 has defined that Peak District National Park aims at being "*net-zero by 2040 through its exemplary response to climate change*". In the past, the park, located in the middle of one of the most heavily populated and industrialised regions in Europe, has suffered a lot from non-sustainable development in its surroundings, which now results in high costs for nature recovery, especially in the moorlands of the Dark Peak.

The park, therefore, follows a number of important goals and projects to contribute to climate change mitigation:

- Recovery of the moorlands and bogs as an important factor for natural carbon sequestration.
- Initiatives to diversify agrarian land use with the goal of sustainably reducing the carbon footprint of farming.
- Support climate-adapted housing, re-using of existing buildings and the reduction of use of lime and cement in the park.
- Support increased use of public transport, both for residents and the many visitors to the park.
- Supporting the major project of building a CO_2 pipeline through the park from Hope Cement Factory, the largest cement plant in the UK, which is located inside the park and was already producing when the National Park was established, for storing CO_2 underground in the Irish Sea.
- Climate-friendly upgrading of the park's own premises.

IV.9 – Visibility of the European Diploma for Protected Areas

The National Park Authority uses the European Diploma logo on all letters and explains the logo with the line “Holder of Council of Europe Diploma”. In some of its reports, the authority refers to the Diploma, but without using the logo.

The logo and/or additional information on the assets and meanings of the European Diploma could not be detected in the National Park office, on the website, and at any of the sites visited during the on-spot-appraisal. The Authority is considering how it can better use and publicise the award of the Diploma, particularly leading up to the 75th anniversary of the Park’s declaration.

V - USES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

V.1 - Exploitation of natural resources

The Peak District National Park has a long history as a mining and quarrying region, with resources of limestone and sandstone important both nationally and to provide local building stone. There are currently 31 active surface quarries in the Peak District National Park, ranging from large limestone quarries down to small-scale building stone quarries. 7 sites are subject to ongoing restoration or aftercare obligations following completion of mineral extraction. Since 2011 there has been a reduction in the number of sites and the output of mineral from the National Park. Discussions about the future use and restoration of one of the largest limestone quarries, connected to Hope Cement, are currently taking place. Other quarrying sites are located close to Buxton but straight outside the boundary of the National Park.

Lead was mined for a longer period of time and delivered to the industrial sites around the park. The former lead mining sites are still visible in the landscape, as a series of dimples on the surface, and well kept (so-called “lead rakes”). The vegetation on top of the former mines features a number of specialised plants that can cope with the high metal concentration in the soil.

Many of the remnants of the former mining activities are still present, like old adits and industrial monuments that are taken care of by volunteer institutions. At some points, they have altered the water regime of the creeks, like in the River Lathkill, which points at the necessity to balance the needs of natural and cultural monument conservation.

New mining and quarrying are usually, in principle, not permitted in the park. In particular cases, a temporary exemption was made, like during the repair work to some of the water reservoir dams. In this case, the water suppliers were allowed to quarry local stone close to the dams for a limited period of time, to make sure that rocks with a similar quality like those used in the dams were used for restauration, and in order to limit transport connected with the works.

The current management plan 2023-28 continues the current strategy of supporting existing minerals industries whilst gradually reducing their impact on the landscapes of the National Park as old permissions lapse. Aim Four, Objective 11 mentions the goal to recognise “the local mineral resource by enabling a sustainable level of mineral activity appropriate to our special landscape”. Action TC.9 under objective 11 foresees to “grow and enhance environmentally and economically sustainable mineral businesses through enabling a sustainable level of mineral activity appropriate to our special landscape”. The framework for this development is to be set out during the revision of the Local Plan by 2025. The National Park Authority has reached agreement with Derbyshire County Council that a future allocation of sites for extraction of limestone aggregate outside the National Park will be sufficient to replace supply from sites inside the National Park as they reach the end of their permitted reserves and/or consented operational periods. This ensures a continued sustainable supply of limestone for society while it is delivered predominantly from outside the National Park in the future.

V.2 - Tourism and leisure activities

Peak District National Park is one of the most important sites for tourism and recreation in the United Kingdom. About 20 million people live within one hour driving time from the park, almost 50 million people within a four hours' journey. The annual number of visitors has been estimated at 13,25 million people in 2018.[17]

Like at many other sites worldwide, people have discovered outdoor recreation as a favourite pastime during the pandemic years. This appreciation hasn't reduced since then, imposing additional challenges on the park management.

Visitors focus on a number of important entrance points to the park. They are welcomed by – at least still for the upcoming years – the seven visitor centres of the park. More and more information on the park and the visiting opportunities is shifted into the website of the National Park. Visitation numbers at the focal points impose a certain challenge to the park management, like guiding tourists and providing for sufficient parking well-integrated into the landscape. Park rangers are deployed mainly at these focal points, too, playing an important role in creating awareness for visitor behaviour which is in line with the protective purpose of the National Park. From an on-site impression, those activities prove to be successful, e.g. by creating more awareness for littering issues than at other comparable sites.

The Peak District and Derbyshire Marketing institutions have issued a five-year plan on "The Rescue and Rebuilding of Peak District and Derbyshire's Visitor Economy" after the pandemic years. Amongst other goals, they focus on a more sustainable visitor experience for the upcoming years.[18]

V.3 - Education and awareness raising

Education and awareness raising for the purpose and the specific qualities of Peak District National Park plays an important role in the park management. They constitute one of the four general aims of the strategic development of the park for the upcoming years.

Education programmes focus on young people, by special school programmes, the Junior Ranger programme for volunteers aged 11 to 17 years, teacher trainings and Peak District Ambassador schools. Another focus is put on producing ways of participation for members of ethnic minorities.[19]

V.4 - Traffic and public access

Although creating a more sustainable way of accessing the National Park by public transport has been a goal for quite some time for the National Park Authority, most of the visitors still come to the park by their own car. Many members of staff of the National Park administration live in the nearby urban centres, like Sheffield, and commute to work by private car. There is a significant number of mainly public bus lines through the park, but they are focusing on transporting working people and school kids from Monday to

[17] https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/learning-about/news/mediacentrefacts

[18] https://dc-peakdistrict.files.svdcdn.com/production/assets/images/recovery-report-final-min.pdf?v=1680019690

[19] https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/learning-about

Friday.[20] Planning a trip by public transport is not made easier because of the fragmentation of public transport providers in the UK.

A number of railway lines running through the park have been disused during the last decades. Peak District National Park owns 34 miles of those disused railway tracks, including historic bridges and tunnels, and have transformed them into cycling and walking trails. 64 miles of the walking and cycling network in the park has been made accessible to disabled people. One of the favourite routes to the public is the Monsal Trail, which crosses a magnificent landscape and offers a wide range of activities.

The old railway station has been transformed in a restaurant with bookshop and other services to provide help and advice to the visitors.

Visitation focuses on those easy-to-use public cycling and walking trails. Wide parts of the park are, on the other side, only scarcely used by visitors, supporting the conservation goals of the park management. In case of conflict along the trails in the more natural parts of the park, specific action is taken, like fixing sludgy parts of the trails so that hiking trails do not reach out into the valuable areas next to them.

[20] https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/visiting/planning-your-visit/publictransport/peak-district-bus-routes

V.5 - Hunting/fishing

Fishing is controlled by the private landowners of the region and limited because of the role of significant parts of the park as the catchment area for drinking water. Some landowners give out daily licenses, depending on seasonal restrictions. Fishing has not appeared to be an issue of conflict during the on-the-spot appraisal.[21]

The rivers of the Peak District are nationally renowned for fly fishing for brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), rainbow trout (*Oncorhyncus mykiss*) and grayling (*Thymallus thymallus*), immortalised in Isaac Walton's book *The Compleat Angler*, published in 1676. Local fishing clubs contribute to a number of partnership conservation projects within the National Park including the control of the Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), an invasive non-native plant, on the Rivers Hamps, Manifold, Dove and Derwent, the control of american mink (*Neovison vison*) on several rivers which particularly benefits the threatened water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*), and natural flood management measures. Whilst some fishing clubs have concerns about the impact of goosander (*Mergus merganser*) on fish stocks, there are currently no significant conflicts between fishing and conservation interests.

Hunting licenses are owned by private people and associations. The Dark Peak is famous for its tradition of Red Grouse hunting, though grouse hunting is not permitted on areas owned by the National Park since 1981. Grouse are hunted mainly by "driven shooting", where gamekeepers and additional people drive the birds towards fixed shooting butts where the hunters are located.[22]

The gamekeepers also actively prepare the moorlands for successful hunting, a.o. by deliberately burning parts of the moors to keep vegetation low. Although this practice to some extent contributes to a natural renewal of the moorland vegetation, it is also controversial from a conservation point of view, given the fact that parts of the moorlands are also prone to other kinds of wildfire, especially if not yet ecologically recovered. Addressing this issue proves challenging, since the hunting industry and the gamekeepers are well-organised and successfully lobbying for their interests both towards authorities and the local population.

V.6 - Human occupation

The resident population of Peak District National Park is very similar to other national parks or rural areas in general. From 1991 to 2020, the population has only dropped by about 3 % (from 38,100 to 36,940). The average age of the population is much higher than in the rest of England and the ethnic diversity considerably smaller (only 1 % come from a different ethnic background than white).[23]

Forecasts point to the situation that the loss of population might increase again, mainly due to the ageing of the residents.

For those still working, besides commuting to the urban centres around or working at major premises inside the park, like Hope Cement, tourism in the park provides for a significant part of the working income of the local population.

[21] https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/visiting/things-to-do/getactive-fishing

[22] https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/visiting/frequently-asked-questions/wildlife-management-and-wildlife-crime

[23] https://reports.peakdistrict.gov.uk/sotpr/docs/settlement-&-communities/resident-population.html

V.7 - Cultural heritage

Paragraph 5 of the current version of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 name the purpose "of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage" of the National Parks in one line, next to each other, without any priority for one of those issues.

This is why the National Park Authority also runs a department for cultural heritage conservation, which supports the part of the administration serving of an authority for local planning and the built environment in their work and works hand in hand with the nature conservation department on any issue that affects both sides. In case of conflict between natural and cultural heritage conservation goals, they discuss ways of how to mitigate those conflicts.

An important part of the work of the cultural heritage department is to give archaeological advice to owners, and especially farmers applying for agri-environmental and woodland creation grants, since the park is rich of archaeologically important environments.[24]

Maintenance of scheduled monuments, listed buildings, and conservation areas lies in the responsibility of the owners of those premises. Since most of them are not owned by the National Park, the National Park Authority serves as the controlling institution in local planning and building permits. Some of the historic monuments are taken care of by private associations. Like in a lot of other sites like Peak District, their stakeholders suffer from ageing and have difficulties finding new and younger members to support them, which leads to a bad outlook for the future of the monuments and, sometimes, to a way of presenting the monuments to the public which might be enhanced.

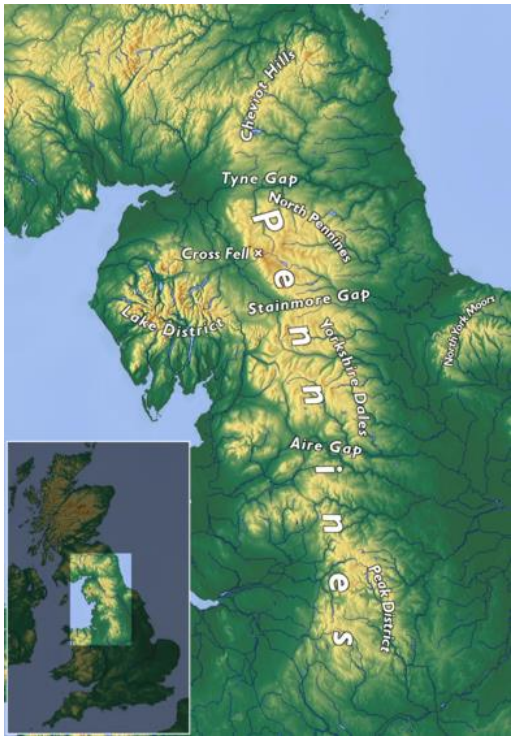
The World Heritage property "Derwent Valley Mills" in Derbyshire, mentioned in some of the strategic documents, lies outside the boundaries of the National Park.

[24] https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/learning-about/archaeology

VI - CONNECTIVITY OF THE AREA

VI.1 - Ecological connectivity with other areas

The Pennines run from north to south through all of Northern England, at a length of approximately 250 miles. They contain many natural ecosystems that only partially are covered by Peak District National Park. Other parts of the mountain range have been declared as protected areas, like the National Parks of Yorkshire Dales and Lake District. North York Moors National Park is not too far either. All of them share many ecological, historical, and social features.



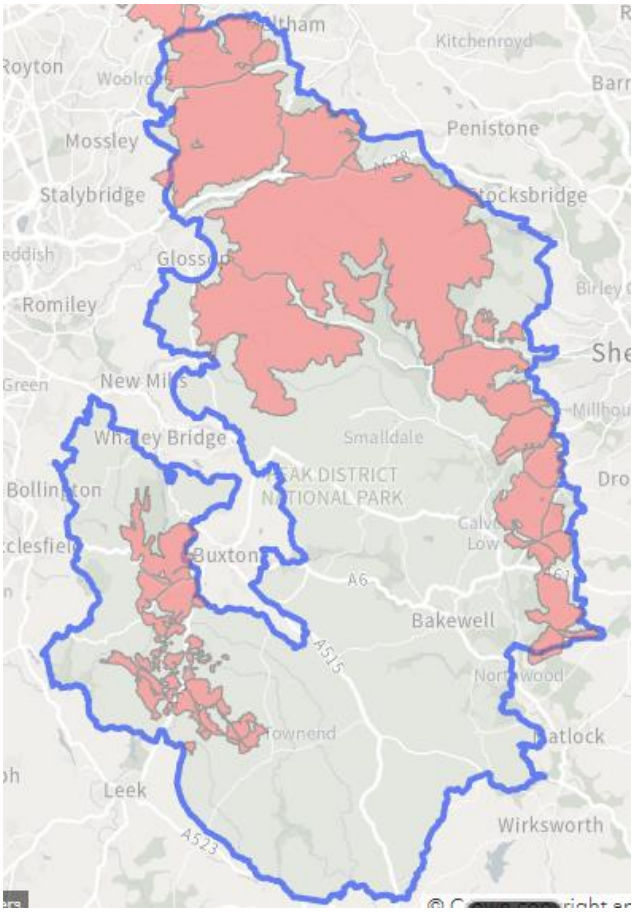
The project “Moors for the Future Partnership” for the restoration of the moorlands of Peak District has actually a geographical scope quite beyond the limits of the National Park, since it includes the West Pennine Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the whole South Pennines Moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC), partly within the National Park.

VI.2 - Other forms of recognition awarded

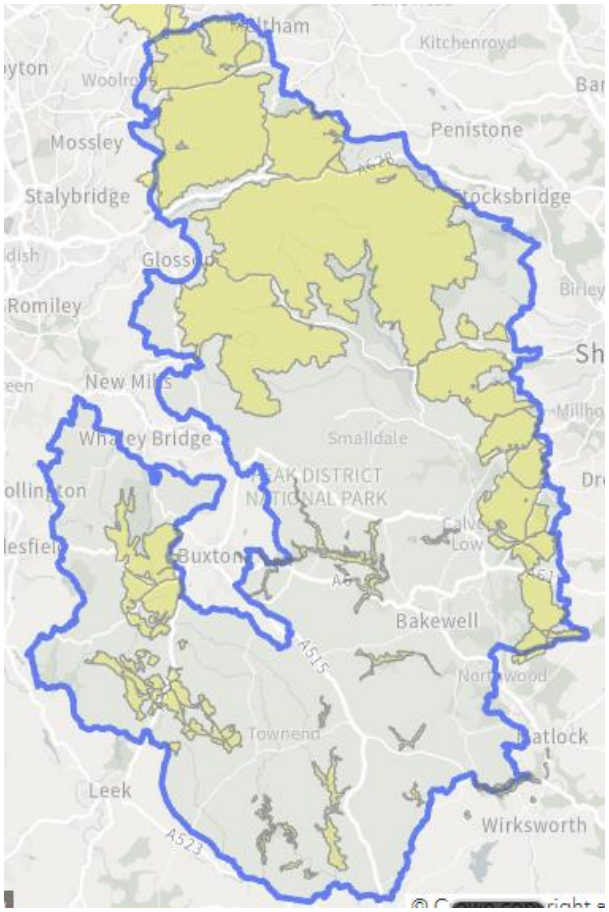
The values of Peak District National Park are both nationally and internationally recognised. Apart from the European Diploma for Protected Areas, the EU legislation designated protected areas under its Directives while the United Kingdom was within the European Union. Even if at present the Natura 2000 network no longer applies in the UK, the Birds and the Habitats Directives have been transposed to the national legislation, thus, to some extent their provisions are still operative and provide a framework to highlight the most valuable habitat types and species, as well as protection measures to avoid their deterioration.

The designations affecting the Peak District National Park under the EU Natura 2000 network (Special Protection Area - SPA and Special Area of Conservation - SAC) and under the national legislation (National Nature Reserves - NNR and Sites of Special Scientific Interest - SSSI) are the following:

Protection category	Surface area	Percentage of territory
1 Special Protection Area (Birds Directive)	45,255 ha	26 %
4 Special Area of Conservation (Habitats Directive)	46,376 ha	25 %
3 National Nature Reserves (NNR)	1,919 ha	1 %
85 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	48.939 ha	26 %
Total designated areas[25]	49,280 ha	27 %



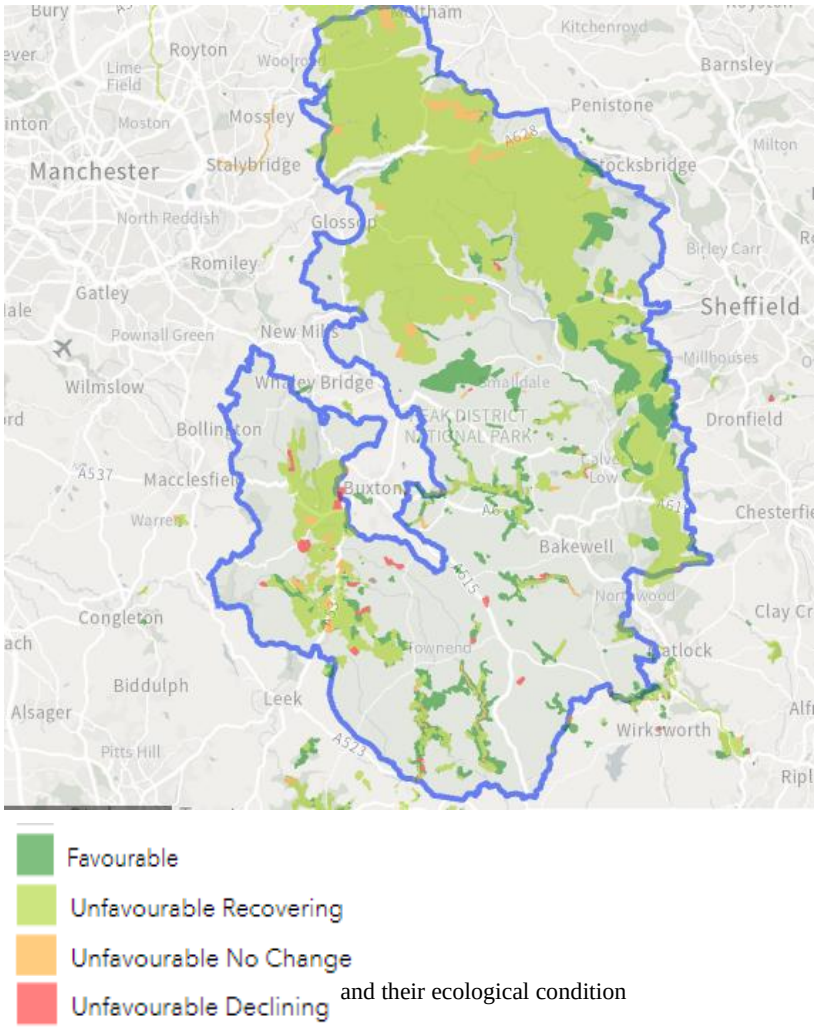
Special Protection Area



Special Areas of Conservation

The assessment of the ecological condition made to the designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest reveals that 95.5 % of their surface area are in favourable or recovering condition, with a large proportion of the area in recovering but still unfavourable condition, as shown in the following map:

[25] Many of the nature protection designations overlap each other.



and their ecological condition

Even though remarkable achievements have been made during the last decades to bring back, in particular, the moorlands into a state of favourable condition, this process is still on-going and might take some more decades to be fully accomplished.

VII - THREATS

VII.1 Global change

The Peak District National Park management plan includes specific measures related to climate change. This is not only man-induced change with capacity to dramatically affect wild species of flora and fauna and their habitats, along with their natural ecological identity, their function and ecosystem services. Other factors linked to human activity, like land-use change, pollution and the arrival and spreading of alien and/or invasive species, along with climate change and an increased risk for wildfires, are being considered as major change drivers worldwide under the common framework of the concept "Global Change". Very often all of them are inter-connected, which sometimes may lead to creating synergies but might also impose severe threats to the future of the planet.

Studies made in many countries at different continents and latitudes show that the consequences of all these changes are fairly evident and that they are occurring very fast. For that reason, the management of natural areas must take into account future change scenarios and prevent as much as possible damages to their ecological condition. It is imperative, then, to count on a precise monitoring programme to detect and identify eventual ecological deterioration early and make decisions helping the system to improve its resilience.

VII.2 Progressive intensification of farming practices

Some recent scientific studies demonstrate the impact of modern agriculture on natural and semi-natural habitats, which may be quite rich in biodiversity and/or abundance of species adapted to agricultural environments. The progressively increasing water consumption, massive use of fertilisers and biocides, and the overall transformation of mosaic landscapes, into huge uniform and poorly structured plots of land covered with little diversity of crops, treated with chemicals to avoid pests, practically void of life and unavailable for wild species of fauna and flora, do not only lead to the breakdown of the previously existing array of biodiversity but also the trivialisation of the landscape.

This process is behind the progressive disappearance of wild common species. Birds, very well studied since decades, are a good example of that. The same must probably hold true for other groups of fauna and flora that are not so well researched into and are also declining. The Peak District National Park Authority considers, with sound judgement, that the reduction of biodiversity and abundance of some common species linked to agricultural environment, for instance the meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*), may be correlated with the increasing degree of intensification of farmlands and with changes of the agricultural practices to improve production.

VII.3 Persecution of birds of prey

As explained in sections II.1 and III.4.1, the situation of birds of prey is positive in some cases and stable or slightly decreasing in other cases. However, for many of them the population levels are not as good as could be expected, and direct persecution of raptors is considered to be one of the factors preventing better results. The raptors are long-living species, and their demographic strategy is based on a low adult mortality rate. If causes of non-natural mortality increase, their population levels are at risk. For that reason, it is very important to counteract all these causes, including direct persecution.

VII.4 Intensification of game hunting in the moorlands

Sport hunting is a common activity in Peak District National Park. The red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus* subsp. *scotica*) is one of the most valuable game species for hunters. Game keepers manage the habitat to increase the densities of birds and to facilitate the hunting practice. This management consists, among others, of rejuvenating heather brushes by controlled burning to keep their growth low. On one hand, this can be contradictory to the process of moorland restoration and regeneration and, to some extent, may contribute to the further degradation of this ecosystem or prevent its recovery. On the other hand, the demand for red grouse hunting might further increase, partly because the interest of people of great acquisitive power. Since this may be financially interesting for game keepers, this might also lead to increased pressure on the habitats and result in the need of an additional effort for nature conservation.

VII.5 Mass tourism

Tourism is an activity that, if it remains uncontrolled, can produce severe degradation and damage to natural areas, like for instance disturbance to wild fauna, trampling soil and vegetation, noise, accumulation of waste or the need for building poorly adapted infrastructures in the open, all resulting in the worsening of the quality of the visitor experience as well. As in most protected areas of Europe, during and after the COVID-19 pandemics the number of visitors enjoying the outdoors has increased, particularly in summer, resulting in situations of overcrowding both at particular locations and/or periods of time.

Peak District National Park receives more than 13 million visitors per year, many of them from the neighbouring urban agglomerations. Very often, they only spend one day or even less in the region and leave very little income to the local economy. The local managers are very experienced in dealing with large amounts of people and implementing measures to satisfy their needs while limiting the impact of tourism. However, if visitor numbers keep increasing, this might require additional strategies and measures to avoid undesired consequences, both for the sake of nature and wildlife and the visitors themselves.

VII.6 Actual and potential shortage of funds for good ecological practices, restoration, and management

The financing of the activities of the National Park does not rely on a single or just a few means of income generation. Civil society is, traditionally, very active in the United Kingdom and values the work of the National Park Authority not only by volunteer work, but also by donations.

Nevertheless, the fact that the annual basic grant from the UK government has fallen by 40 % in real value since 2010 imposes a severe threat to the future of the National Park. Even if the management is constantly investigating into ways to become more cost-efficient, the drop in basic grant funding has reached a point where the National Park Authority will soon no longer be able to keep up the exceptional quality of the park management that they themselves, but also the responsible people in the UK government righteously should be proud of. A further cutting in public grants or even the lack of valorisation of the existing funds will jeopardize the existing quality of the National Park management that, still, can serve as a role model to all of Europe.

In addition to that, there is an urgent need to replace all former EU funds that particularly the project work of the National Park relied on by national grants. As for the agri-environmental schemes, this seems to have, at least partly, already happened. As for funds for nature conservation, this still has to be done. Since a lot of the projects in the National Park have long-term character and need to be steadily continued in order

not to risk the achievements in nature recovery of the last years, this task needs to be undertaken with utmost priority. A reliable source of national grants would also be very important when facing challenges requiring immediate action, like the outbreak of ash dieback.

VII.7 Keeping up volunteer commitment, especially for the built cultural heritage

The United Kingdom is righteously famous for its very high level of civil society commitment for causes for public welfare. Peak District National Park, to some extent, relies on the willingness of civil society to invest time and money into nature and heritage conservation as well – in supporting wardens, tidying up, or in maintaining historical sites.

Especially in the field of the conservation of the built heritage, Peak District faces the same challenges as many other similar sites all over Europe: volunteers are not that easily found anymore, many associations and initiatives taking care of certain monuments are slowly but steadily over ageing, thus slowly losing the ability to invest as much manpower and time as before into "their" objects, delivering high-quality educational work, and lacking ability to innovation.

The National Park Authority tries, to some extent, to fill the gap by opening up its work to parts of society that could make a difference in the future, like the youth or so-far underrepresented groups like ethnic minorities. Still, there seems to be a certain need to more than so far explicitly deal with the challenges of the existing volunteers and associations, in order to help them take the necessary steps into the future. This task seems to not have been as much in the foreground of the National Park management as is might be feasible.

VIII - IMPLEMENTATION OF PREVIOUS CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When the European Diploma was renewed in 2011, Resolution CM/ResDip(2011)11 set 1 condition and 11 recommendations. According to the information collected during the appraisal visit and from relevant sources, the undersigned experts could draw the following conclusions:

Assessment of CONDITION 1 – *complete the review of the national park management plan and continue implementation of the plans and strategies it contains.*

The National Park Management has recently renewed its management plan. The current plan aims at the development of the National Park for the next 20 years and contains an extensive part on actions to be accomplished by 2028. The National Park Management strictly works along the lines of this management plan and its many sub-strategies and is successful in involving other stakeholders in the region into its strategic and operative work.

The condition has, therefore, been **fulfilled.**

For the forthcoming renewal, **this condition should be dropped.**

Assessment of RECOMMENDATION 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 National Park Management invests significant amounts of their resources into this recommendation. Methods of conservation are constantly delevoped and made suitable for the specific challenges, depending on the various stakeholders approached and on the specific tasks the various natural environments impose.

The breaking-off of EU funds for this task has, at least as for the agri-environmental schemes, been partly replaced by national funding which is similar to the schemes that were at stake before Brexit. As for financing nature conservation, there is still a gap in national legislation to be filled, which might, on a medium term, prove crucial for the future of moorland restauration and woodland creation, including the mitigation of the current challenge of ash dieback.

Fulfilling this recommendation requires constant work along the strategic lines that have been successfully implemented, which means that, although the National Park seems to be on a good track, the recommendation is basically a long-term goal.

The recommendation has, therefore, been **fulfilled.**

For the forthcoming renewal, **this recommendation should be maintained.**

Assessment of RECOMMENDATION 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 project is making impressive progress, but because of the sheer size of the degraded areas of moorland, the project needs to be continued in the future. The project probably never relied on agri-environment schemes since it is not about farming but restoring degraded natural or close to natural areas.

On a mid-term perspective, the Moors for the Future Partnership might suffer from the lack of creating a national replacement on UK level for the formerly used EU funds (LIFE). This is why the management plan for the park defines the future of the Moors for the Future Partnership as a key to fulfilling the climate mitigation goals of the park (natural storage of CO_2). The management plan names three actions (CC.6 to CC.8) under aim one (net-zero by 2040) that deal with securing the financial future of the partnership and with specific operative actions within the partnership.

The recommendation has, therefore, been **partially fulfilled.**

For the forthcoming renewal, **this recommendation should be maintained** but worded differently.

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

The ongoing upgrading of farmland, especially in the White Peak, by knowledge support, agri-environmental grants and National Park grants, should, theoretically, provide a benefit for the priority bird species on farmland, as well as for certain birds of prey. During the on-the-spot appraisal, we could witness two Red Kites on the model farm we visited.

The State-of-Nature Report from 2016 shows a more differentiated picture. Some priority bird species thrived well in Derbyshire whereas their numbers went down in the Sheffield area. The Moors for the Future project area showed some totally different results. There seems to be some interdependence between the various species – as one species diminishes, there is more space for other species that, in return, thrive.

Anyway, it seems that there is no general common trend of losing bird populations in the park with all relevant species. Still, it seems that some particular species need more attention than others. Another misfortunate story is the attempt to re-introduce the black grouse in the moorlands, which failed.

A lot will depend on the results of more current surveys that might be discussed in the upcoming renewal of the State-of-Nature Report.

The recommendation has, therefore, been **partially fulfilled.**

For the forthcoming renewal, **this recommendation should be reinforced** but worded differently.

Assessment of RECOMMENDATION 4 – *negotiate agreements to secure appropriate management of ancient and semi-natural woodland sites.*

Such agreements and specific projects on a more general level were on a good way but have been recently overshadowed by the massive outbreak of ash dieback in the park. This is why the current efforts do not only focus on appropriate management but on safeguarding the existence of parts of the woodland sites by reducing densities, replacing dying ash by more appropriate tree species, and by fighting the problems of invasive species, particularly along the rivers and creeks. These problems are tackled with a lot of manpower and financial resources. As with other nature conservation related projects, the future of the intervention will at least partly rely on the replacement of EU funds by the UK government, which has not happened yet.

The recommendation has, therefore, been **partially fulfilled.**

For the forthcoming renewal, **this recommendation should be reinforced** but worded differently.

Assessment of RECOMMENDATION 5 – *implement with partners programmes to achieve the targets and objectives set out in the Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011-2020.*

The overall aim of the Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan 2011-2020 was "*Working together for a healthy network of diverse habitats that will benefit wildlife, landscapes, people and natural resources for a sustainable future*". For that purpose, maintaining living landscapes with maximum biodiversity, providing ecosystem services like clean water, carbon storage, soil protection, food provision and air quality, and contributing significantly to the local economy and to the sense of well-being of residents and visitors were the principles guiding the objectives and targets to be achieved.

The Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan set out the following broad objectives:

1. Restore degraded blanket bog.
2. Restore and expand upland heathlands.
3. Enhance and restore moorland fringe habitats.
4. Increase semi-natural woodlands.
5. Enhance, restore, and expand wetlands and river corridor habitats.

The plan further developed these broad objectives firstly into common wide targets for the whole protected area and secondly into specific targets for each one of the three National Character Areas (as defined by Natural England, see section II.2), namely the White Peak, the Dark Peak and the South West Peak. For each of them specific priorities and actions, both for habitats and for species, have been established.

To meet these challenges, the Biodiversity Action Plan stressed on the importance of making coordinated effort in close partnership with local landowners and land managers and to deliver actions of highest priority in terms of biodiversity. This strategic approach is coherent with the policy guidelines of the Peak District National Park Authority.

As correctly described by the National Park Authority in the latest annual report at disposal, from 2021, a lot of the achievements regarding recommendations #1 to #4 could only be accomplished because of a strategic and partnership-oriented approach to nature and biodiversity conservation. The former Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan is currently being revised and is supposed to be formulated as a new "Nature Recovery Plan". At the beginning of the revision process, the National Park Authority defined

ambitious delivery targets in a prospectus for nature recovery by the end of 2031[26]. Achieving these targets can only be accomplished by continuing the successful integrated approach and by networking with relevant partners, as the park did so in the past.

The recommendation has, therefore, been **fulfilled.**

For the forthcoming renewal, **this recommendation should be dropped.**

Assessment of RECOMMENDATION 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.*

In the latest annual report at disposal (from 2021), the National Park Authority mentions that 95.5 % of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are either in favourable or recovering condition (see also section VI.2). There is no specific approach to treat SSSI differently than other valuable areas in the park. Bringing back the SSSI to favourable condition may therefore be seen as a part of the general strategy of the park management to upgrade the quality of nature conservation in all relevant habitats.

The recommendation has, therefore, been **fulfilled.**

For the forthcoming renewal, **this recommendation should be dropped**.

Assessment of RECOMMENDATION 7 – *carry out conservation and community work at a landscape scale through an integrated area-based management approach.*

The current management plan shows this integrated approach. The amount of cooperation between the wealth of stakeholders in the park is impressive and reflects that an area-based management approach is working properly in Peak District National Park.

The recommendation has, therefore, been **fulfilled.**

For the forthcoming renewal, **this recommendation should be dropped.** It is represented in what has been condition 1 so far, which is proposed to be dropped as well.

Assessment of RECOMMENDATION 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.*

As far as witnessed during the on-the-spot appraisal, the park management fully follows this recommendation. Potential problems in the future do not arise from a lack of cooperation but mainly from the state of partner organisations and local communities.

The recommendation has, therefore, been **fulfilled.**

[26] https://democracy.peakdistrict.gov.uk/documents/s45191/Appendix%201%20-%20PDNP%20Nature%20Recovery%20Prospectus.pdf

For the forthcoming renewal, **this recommendation should be maintained** but worded differently and focused on the specific challenges that cultural heritage conservation has to deal with in the Peak District National Park.

Assessment of RECOMMENDATION 9 – *continue to provide encouragement to small-scale economic schemes linking conservation of the environment of the Peak District to economic benefit.*

The recommendation has been formulated rather generally. It most of all applies to the initiatives to make farming more ecologically sustainable. As for other businesses, like e.g. local bakeries or tourism businesses, this might relate to creating regional delivery chains or using organically produced agricultural products. This has only happened to a certain extent and was, so far, not in the foreground of action of the park management.

Objective 11 of the current National Park Management Plan deals with this recommendation. The park has chosen to focus on providing small-scale economic enterprises with a good background to thrive via its role as the local planning authority. The management plan does only to a certain extent reflect the approach to actively interfere in the economic development of the park region, for example by supporting the creation of value chains inside the park, at least when it comes to local businesses other than farming.

The recommendation has, therefore, been **partially fulfilled.**

For the forthcoming renewal, **this recommendation should be reinforced** but worded differently.

Assessment of RECOMMENDATION 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.*

The park management closely followed this recommendation during the last decade.

The recommendation has, therefore, been **fulfilled.**

For the forthcoming renewal, **this recommendation should be reinforced**, with regard to the Local Plan currently under revision.

Assessment of RECOMMENDATION 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.*

Currently, more than 13 million people visit the park annually. This means that there is no need to investigate into new methods to attract more people to the park but rather to make sure that this level of visitation happens in a way which supports local communities and does not lead to any development that might end up in over-tourism challenges. So far, the park management has been successful in dealing with the situation appropriately.

As for more sustainable ways of travel to and from the park, this has proved challenging, given the general accessibility deficits by public transport to a genuinely rural area. Under aim three of the current management plan, the park management wants to put effort into creating a more sustainable and inclusive

way of visiting the park, which also encompasses actions for young people, under-served communities, and people with reduced mobility. The management plan does not contain any clear action exclusively focussing of the issue of a more sustainable travel to, from, and within the park, though.

In terms of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, for whatever reason, an agreement between the park management and Europarc has not been reached. It is a management decision to be taken by the park management whether they want to apply to the Charter or not. From the point of view of the assessors, this is not a key matter as long as the park management strives after following high-end standards when dealing with the park's challenges arising from tourism.

The recommendation has, therefore, been **partially fulfilled.**

For the forthcoming renewal, this recommendation should be maintained in general but worded differently as far as the European Charter is concerned.

IX - Final Appraisal

The preliminary conclusion of the undersigned experts is **to recommend the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas to Peak District National Park for 10 years since the area is of European interest and it is managed in an exemplary way.**

For the renewal of the European Diploma to **Peak District National Park the following recommendations are proposed:**

RECOMMENDATION 1: *Do everything which is in the power of management that restructuring the National Park management and services does not jeopardize the so far exceptionally good work done; keep lobbying for an annual grant from the government that is able to cover the fixed costs of the park; keep lobbying for a full replacement of former EU funds with national grants in order to be able to tackle on-going and acute challenges adequately; keep investigating into alternative sources of financing.*

RECOMMENDATION 2: *Keep investing into the full set of actions that contribute to mitigating the negative effects of climate change, like natural sequestration of carbon and greenhouse gases, woodland recovery, sustainable farming, adapted housing, and changing the ways of traffic within and to and from the National Park; support alternative forms of climate change mitigation, like the projected carbon dioxide storage under the sea, only if they do not jeopardize the specific values of the National Park.*

RECOMMENDATION 3: *Keep on working for a total recovery of the moorlands and bogs to a reasonable ecological status, including enhanced resilience to wildfires; keep teaming up with the water suppliers who need healthy moorlands as catchment areas for drinking water supply.*

RECOMMENDATION 4: *Keep on managing the limestone dales and their woodlands in a way that preserves the ecological highlights of the habitats; keep researching into new and adapted caretaking methods.*

RECOMMENDATION 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.*

RECOMMENDATION 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 went or are at risk of going extinct and define the management measures that should be taken to assure a successful release of those species in the wild, as a first step for their future return to Peak District National Park.*

RECOMMENDATION 7: *Keep liaising with gamekeepers and moorland owners and managers in order to make sure that hunting in the moorlands maintains its ecological functionality.*

RECOMMENDATION 8: *Deepen the knowledge on the birds of prey in the park and implement measures to eliminate their persecution and other causes of non-natural mortality.*

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

RECOMMENDATION 10: *Increase the percentage of local farms which cooperate with the National Park in increasing the ecological level of farming standards and the quality of cultural heritage preservation in the National Park. Continue influencing and lobbying for appropriate and adequate agri-environment scheme support and a continuation of funding dedicated to environmentally sustainable farming within Protected Landscapes, building on the experience of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.*

RECOMMENDATION 11: *Ensure that Local Plan policies and planning decisions only support the growth of the mineral extraction and quarrying industry in the park if they follow rules that make sure that key values and assets of the National Park are not endangered, and where possible are enhanced.*

RECOMMENDATION 12: *Continue addressing new and so-far underrepresented groups of people on the purpose and assets of the National Park at the same time as actively deal with ways of supporting existing volunteers and their associations, both for nature and heritage conservation.*

RECOMMENDATION 13: *Keep investigating into innovative methods of landscape monitoring and planning in order to get deeper and more efficient insights into the current situation of the National Park.*

RECOMMENDATION 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.*

RECOMMENDATION 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 at the park's own premises and on the website.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors of this report wish to warmly thank the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) for the arrangements made for a successful visit to this European Diploma area. In particular, we wish to thank Mr Rhodri Thomas (PDNPA Land & Nature Team Manager), who organised in detail the programme of the visit, accompanied us for all the time we spent in England and showed us excellent examples of management, restoration, and partnership of great interest. We would also thank the Senior Management Team, Mr Ken Smith (PDNPA Chair), Mr Phil Mulligan (CEO), and Ms Suzanne Fletcher (Head of Landscape & Engagement), who received us and provided useful information and comments on relevant aspects of the EDPA renewal for Peak District National Park.

Some members of the Park's staff have also joined us during the visit, paying attention to all our questions and needs and being extremely kind and helpful. In particular, Ms Sarah Bird (PDNPA Nature Recovery Officer), Mr Andy Farmer (PDNPA Ranger Team Manager), Ms Rachael Lyon (PDNPA Engagement Manager), Ms Anna Badcock (PDNPA Cultural Heritage Manager), Mr Chris Dean (Project Manager of Moors for the Future Partnership) and Mr Rob Meetham (PDNPA Landscape Architect), have explained to us on the spot the main management and conservation issues under their responsibility.

Mr Joe Alsop (Natural England) showed us the management and conservation challenges (limestone dale caretaking, mining, ash dieback, etc.) at Cressbrook Dale, Ravensdale, and Lathkill Dale.

Mr Tom Mills, farmer and owner of Bubnell Cliff Farm, showed us the good practices agreed upon with the PDNPA in relation to the breeding of local cattle according to sustainability criteria and financed by EU funds (before Brexit) and national agri-environmental funds (afterwards).

We also want to warmly acknowledge Mr Marc Hory and Mr Michaël Nguyen from the Secretariat of the Council of Europe for the perfect organisation of the visit and their constant support.

Granada, Spain, December 2023
Blanca Ramos
Conservation Biologist

Tulln, Austria, December 2023
Michael Schimek
Planner and former EDPA Site Manager

ANNEX I

AGENDA OF THE APPRAISAL VISIT

COUNCIL OF EUROPE VISIT 2023- DRAFT ITINERARY

PDNPA= PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MONDAY 23RD OCTOBER

Arrival Manchester Airport 15:35 + 17:00

Transport to Bakewell

TUESDAY 24TH OCTOBER

RHODRI THOMAS (PDNPA Land & Nature Team Manager)

Morning

8:30	Collection and travel to National Park Office
8:45- 9:00	**PDNPA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM: Phil Mulligan (Chief Executive); Suzanne Fletcher (Head of Landscape & Engagement) Introductory meeting with National Park Senior Management Team**
9:00-9:15	Travel
9:15-11:00	**SARAH BIRD (PDNPA Nature Recovery Officer); TOM MILLS (Farmer, Bubnell Cliff Farm)** **Site visit, Bubnell Cliff Farm - Delivering National Park objectives on productive farmland** • **Farming in Protected Landscape programme** • **Using national grant schemes** • **Wood Pasture** • **Herbal Leys** • **Historic building restoration**
11:00-11:15	Travel
11:15-12:15	**ANDY FARMER (PDNPA Ranger Team Manager)** **Monsal Head** • **Monsal Trail** • **Access for all** • **Open Access** • **Visitor management**
12:15-12:30	Travel
12:30-13:15	LUNCH (Hassop café) **RACHAEL LYON (PDNPA Engagement Manager);SUE FLETCHER (PDNPA Head of Landscape & Engagement)**

Afternoon

13:15-13:30	Travel
13:30- 16:00	**JOE ALSOP (Natural England)** **Derbyshire Dales National Nature Reserve (Cressbrook Dale and Lathkill Dale)** • **Limestone dales management** • **Ash Dieback** • **Nutrient neutrality and planning**

16:30-16:45 Return to Bakewell

WEDNESDAY 25TH OCTOBER
RHODRI THOMAS (PDNPA Land & Nature Team Manager)
ANNA BADCOCK (PDNPA Cultural Heritage Manager)

Morning

9:00- 10:00 Travel (including drop-off of luggage at National Park office for collection at end of day)

10:00-12:30 CHRIS DEAN (Project Manager, Moors for the Future Partnership)
Snailsden Moor - site visit with Moors for the Future partnership project, looking at moorland restoration work and moorland management issues

- **Revegetating bare peat**
- **Rewetting blanket bog (grip and gully blocking; reprofiling gullies)**
- **Sphagnum replanting**
- **Wildfire Risk**
- **Heather management**
- **Clough woodland**
- **"Rewilding"**
- **Natural Zone Planning policy and enforcement (moorland tracks)**

12:30-12:45 Travel

12:45-13:15 ROB MEETHAM (PDNPA Landscape Architect)
Dunford Bridge

- **undergrounding of electricity lines**
- **Landscape enhancement Initiative**

13:15-13:30 Travel

13:30-14:00 LUNCH (Bank View café, Langsett)

Afternoon-

14:00-15:00 Travel

15:00-15:45 ANDY GILLINGS (Director, Peak District Mines Historical Society)
Magpie Mine, Sheldon (a historic scheduled Lead Mine site)

- **Meet Peak District Mines Historical Society**
- **Management of historic landscapes**
- **Undergrounding of electricity lines**

15:45-16:00 Travel

16:00-17:00 PHIL MULLIGAN (PDNPA Chief Executive), KEN SMITH (PDNPA Chair) & SUE FLETCHER (PDNPA Head of Landscape & Engagement)
National Park Office- Meet National Park Chair (Ken Smith), Chief Executive (Phil Mulligan) and Head of Landscape & Engagement (Sue Fletcher).

17:00 Travel to Manchester