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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Working Party - "European Diploma"

Peak District National Park

Report on the on-the-spot appraisal

14-16 October 1975

by

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The European Diploma was awarded to the Peak District National Park on 29 March 1966 and renewed for another period of five years on 22 September 1971. This period will end in 1976. In order to consider a further renewal of the Diploma, a new on-the-spot appraisal by an independent expert must be carried out in accordance with the regulations in force (Resolution (73) 4). The Secretariat General has charged Dr. J.G. de Molenaar (The Netherlands) to carry out this task. It took place on 14, 15 and 16 October 1975. Mr. de Molenaar was accompanied by Mr. Ribaut, member of the Secretariat. The Peak District National Park is classified in the category "c".

Mandate

The Secretariat General has asked me to carry out an on-the-spot appraisal of the Peak District National Park (United Kingdom) to advise on the decision concerning the renewal of the Diploma awarded to the Park in 1966 and renewed in 1971. The terms of reference were:

- study the present state of the site and thus ascertain whether the site has improved, deteriorated or remained the same since the date the Diploma was awarded or since the date of the first renewal;
- analyse the state of conservation of the flora, fauna and landscape (progression or regression of species);
- study the impact of the public on the flora, fauna and landscape and make proposals for improving the situation;
- analyse policy with regard to mining operations; examine the effects of atmospheric pollution by sulphur dioxide on the various ecosystems;
- examine alterations (material or legislative) already completed or in progress.

The on-the-spot appraisal was carried out on 14, 15 and 16 October 1975, the first two days accompanied by Mr. Ribaut, Head of Environment and Natural Resources.

Mr. Ribaut and I did not know the Park from previous visits. The first two days we spent on a reconnaissance trip around the site, meanwhile discussing the various problems and topics in the field with the accompanying Park authorities. The last day I spent on visiting some selected areas (forest management) and on further discussion with the authorities mentioned.

My appraisal is based on

- information supplied by the Secretariat General, chiefly:
 - the annual reports submitted to the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources by the Peak District Planning Board since 1971;
 - the corresponding Reports on Decisions Taken by the Working Party on the European Diploma of this Committee;
 - The Peak District National Park Structure Plan part 2; report of survey;
 - The Peak District National Park: Your Choice for the Future;
- written information supplied by the Board during the visit, chiefly:
 - the annual reports no. 20-23 (April 1971 - March 1975) of the Planning Board presented to the Secretary of State for the Environment;
 - various pamphlets;
- information, partly written, supplied during the visit by ^{the} local authority of the Nature Conservancy;
- oral information from the representatives of the Board and field impressions.

It should be noted, however, that the season, the duration of the visit and

in consequence for instance the possibility to consult specialists other than those present during the visit itself were not optimal to carry out my task.

1. The present state of the site

As far as I was able to ascertain on the basis of the information mentioned above, the general state of the site does not appear to have changed significantly since the date of the first renewal of the European Diploma.

2. The state of conservation of the flora, fauna and landscape

2.1. Flora and fauna

According to my information there has not been observed any significant progression or regression of plant and animal species (or ecosystems) since 1971. However, the status of the Black Grouse gives some reason for concern as it does elsewhere in Northwestern Europe because of its very gradual decrease in number.

2.2. Landscape

The landscape does not seem to have been seriously affected positively or negatively since 1971. Minor changes occurred very locally, both in positive and negative sense, in consequence of various activities (mining, public), and measures taken or instigated by the Board.

2.3. Nature conservation

I observed that there is a very close, good and fruitful cooperation between the Board and the local authority of the Nature Conservancy and the County Naturalists Trusts, resulting in an active and adequate policy aiming at the protection and proper management of areas of special biological value.

2.4. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

There are 56 SSSIs in the Park, covering a total area of 18,239 ha or 13% of the total area of the Park (September 1975); for details on the SSSI concept, see: Information sheet issued by the Nature Conservancy Council (Midland's Region) CF/January, 1974).

2.5. Reserves

The total area of nature reserves is 325.8 ha (almost 0.25% of the Park; September 1975), in casu Statutorily Protected Nature Reserves (Nature Conservancy Council): 138.5 ha (area declared 118.66 ha, area acquired but not yet declared 19.85 ha), Non-Statutory Reserves (County Naturalists Trusts) 187.3 ha (including 42.12 ha held under short term lease or agreement).

3. The impact of the public on the flora, fauna and landscape

3.1. The public

The total area of the Park is 139,378 ha. It receives annually approximately 16 million visitors (1973). In 1963 this number was some 4 million. The number of 'active' walkers, climbers, potholers etc. has increased steadily, whilst the number of family motorists has increased very rapidly.

3.2. Flora and fauna

In general the impact of the public on the flora and fauna is negative.

There is no documentation on a pronounced general influence of the public on the flora and fauna in the Park during recent years. Because of experiences elsewhere the number and spread of the visitors however is worrying. Recently there is a local increase in anthropogenic erosion due to excessive visit: for instance at Dovedale and Winnats Pass on limestone slopes and near Stanage Edge and here and there along the Pennine Way footpath in wet moorland, causing damage to the vegetation and thus supposedly to the ecosystem on the spot. A study in 1967-1970 of the Red Grouse population showed no evidence of a decline associated with public access agreements to the moors (Picozzi, 1971). The damage done to epilithic (foliose) lichen vegetation on cliffs in favour by climbers is presumably of rather old date and did not increase significantly since the early seventies.

3.3. Landscape

Much of the visual impact of the public is temporal and limited to certain periods of the year. Car parks, camping and caravanning sites, picknick places and the like appear to be located and sheltered in such a way that they do considerably less harm to the landscape when in use than they might do in other circumstances. In the period when they are little or not used they do hardly, if any harm to the landscape. Other facilities, such as trails do in my opinion not harm the visual qualities of the scenery. Erosion is, however, locally a problem. The measures taken by the Board to prevent or to remedy erosion and other visual - temporal or permanent - damage seem adequate (the Goyt valley experiment, Winnats Pass); this also holds for situations where plans are in development (Dovedale); see 3.4.

3.4. General policy and actions of the Planning Board

The general policy of the Board is to control the influx of visitors so as to prevent any deterioration of sites. Recreational use should be based on the specific qualities and capacity of the different areas. One solution is to divert the public from sensitive areas towards less fragile ones, another to limit the access for instance by cars (car parks!), a third to guide and concentrate along special routes. This aim is also pursued by the Board intensively by information of the public at the Information Centres and in courses given at the Losehill Hall National Park Study Centre.

3.5. Management Agreements

The Board commissioned dr. J.F. Wager of the University of Manchester to undertake a study of Monsal Dale with particular emphasis on the value of management agreements to improve existing conditions. The report appeared early 1975 and deals with the general framework of land tenure and the concept of management agreements, and tests the general argument for comprehensive land use management by a study of the land ownership and use pattern of the area. This study seems to offer a sound basis for a Monsal Dale agreement, for further consultation with interested parties and for drawing up other agreements.

4. Proposals for improving the situation (cfr. 2-3)

I want to underline the great efforts made by the Board and its collaborators to adjust new developments and increasing pressure to the special natural and scenic values of the areas involved. This is done both by using exhaustively the present material and legal possibilities, as well as by trying to create or acquire new possibilities where the present ones are insufficient, or by stimulating them.

In this context I want to recommend or encourage

- land acquisition; the acquisition of land in (or adjacent to) areas of special natural or scenic fragility and/or high value - actually or in potentia - should be encouraged; ownership of land is the most effective way to exercise positive control;
- management agreements; the design and concluding of management agreements should be encouraged as a second choice or as a supplement on land acquisition; these should be long term agreements which could be revised periodically;
- restoration of deteriorated areas; in particular wooded areas and single trees and groups of trees (whether more 'natural' woods, or more 'landscaped' woods, depending on the situation and potential of the site; ageing and over-mature trees, in particular concentrated on the limestone plateau) and eroded areas;
- strict application of resource-based planning, no demand-planning;
- full control over planning of farm buildings in the entire Park, including control over alterations on existing constructions and over the change of use of buildings.
- afforestation; tree planting can have such an effect on landscape and environment that it should be controlled by the Board; at present there is no legal control of afforestation, although there are some voluntary consultation arrangements;
- minerals; since mineral operations in the Park are rapidly increasing in scale and impact the power of the Board over the control of minerals should be improved:
 - a) all exploratory operations should require planning permission;
 - b) all quarry plant and buildings should require planning permission;
 - c) to deal with changes over the years it should be lawful to review conditions attached to mineral consents periodically;
 - d) there should be legal provision for the making of outline mineral applications subject to details to be approved later, again with the possibility of variation of details to meet changed circumstances;
 - e) as in the case of ironstone extraction there should be a restoration fund to ensure full restoration of all mineral sites, thus avoiding the failure to restore if the operator becomes insolvent or disappears.

5. Mining operations

The Board are greatly concerned about the environmental effects on the National Park of large scale mineral working. The firm action taken by them is demonstrated by the following examples.

5.1. Limestone quarrying

At present the total area of planning consent in the National Park amounts to circa 234 ha (13 quarries), of which about 177 ha concerns the area of planning consent which contain reserves being worked or to be worked. In the Park limestone production increased fourfold between 1951 and 1971 from 1.4 to 5.4 million tonnes per year.

5.2. Control of development

In 1973 a company made an application to extend the quarrying area at Tunstead, near Buxton, by about 110 ha of which about 80 ha lie in the Park. The Board have refused planning permission for this large scale extension because they consider that

- the proposed development would cause serious injury to the National Park landscape and to the living conditions of local residents;
- because considerable reserves still appear to be available in the existing quarry, a full assessment of the application should await the reports of three government committees which are likely to have

relevance to the application;

- approval of the application would have been incompatible with their statutory duty to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Park and to promote its enjoyment by the public.

The applicants have appealed against the Board's decision. This means that following a public inquiry to be held in the near future, the final decision on the application will be given by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

5.3. Fluorspar working

In the National Park there are at present 78 sites with current permission for fluorspar working. In February 1975 the number of sites being worked totalled 46. By 1972 U.K. production of fluorspar had reached 220.000 tons, from about 650.000 tons of crude ore raised. Of this total about 180.000 tons (representing 565.000 tons of crude ore raised) came from Derbyshire, almost all of which was from the Peak District National Park. The vein mineral is extracted by reworking of disposal at abandoned lead mining sites and by working newly disclosed veins. The purification of the mineral at the large workings leaves a more or less fluid waste being disposed of in tailing lagoons (total waste covered are about 17 ha).

5.4. Control of development

Recently a company sought the Board's view on proposed extensions to an existing fluorspar working at Youlgrave. The Board discussed future ore supplies with the company and with Derbyshire County Council and said that they would be likely to approve in principle, formal applications for this extension in view of the local employment situation. The Board made it clear however, that they would expect the company to backfill the excavations and restore the sites to agriculture at an early date and that they would expect a financial guarantee that this would be done. The Board made it clear that they would be unlikely to approve any future application for a new tailings lagoon in the Park and urged the Company to consider installing a filter press to make the waste suitable for transportation to backfill the Youlgrave excavations.

Another company made an application for the construction of a dam at the head of Coombs Dale to provide for a lagoon of 28 ha for the disposal of fluorspar waste. The proposal was first made about five years ago when the Board made it clear that the continued despoilation of large areas of lands for this purpose was unacceptable. Two waste lagoons, totalling more than 12 ha were already in use and almost full. The Board granted planning permission at that time for a further lagoon of about 16 ha in a low lying area which would meet the needs of the company for five years, during which time the Board considered they should find a more acceptable method of disposing of the waste. This could be done either by chemical stabilisation of the waste, or by total filtration to enable the material to be transported to suitable disposal sites outside the Park.

Both companies contend they are unable to accept the additional cost of disposal in this manner. Subsequently the latter company have appealed to the Secretary of State to allow the construction of the 28 ha lagoon close to the existing plant. A public inquiry was in progress at the moment of my visit to the Park.

6. Effects of atmospheric pollution by sulphur dioxide

Air pollution by SO₂ is considered to constitute the major factor influencing the lichens in the Park (Hawksworth 1974). In some areas declines due to air pollution have occurred since 1968 whilst in other areas slight improvements

have been detected. However, local topographic conditions, prevailing wind directions and shelter or exposure are important factors influencing and modifying the effects of air pollution from place to place. In consequence it is not possible to ascertain that the lichen flora and vegetation in the Park have distinctly changed recently.

More recent data on this subject and on the influence of atmospheric pollution on other groups of organisms or on ecosystems in the National Park do not exist according to my information.

7. Alterations (material or legislative) already completed or in progress

The annual reports submitted by the Planning Board to the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and to the Secretary of State for the Environment in Great Britain give a full review of alterations (material and legislative) completed or in progress over the period 1971-1975.

I will hereafter mention some.

- In May, 1974, the report of the National Park Policies Review Committee, the 'Sandford Report', was published. The comprehensive framework within which the policy recommendations of this Committee will be developed will be provided by the Structure and the National Park Plan.
- The Development Plan (1955, revised 1966) is outdated. The draft of the Structure Plan, which will replace that plan, is finished. The Structure Plan will deal with the major issues facing the Park and will define broad policies and proposals on a wide range of different topics, from housing to forestry practice and from mineral working to recreational management. Recently it has seen the second and perhaps most important stage of public participation in its preparation ('Your Choice for the Future').
- The National Park Plan, which will work up Structure Plan policies into a coherent plan of action finding immediate expression in a five year rolling programme of work, will be started shortly; much work has already been done towards its preparation.
- The Board does strictly control the issue of permissions to the limit allowed by legislation. Early 1974 under local government reorganisation the Board has strengthened its position by the withdrawal from District Councils of the delegation of some of the responsibilities for dealing with planning applications.
- Work on a proposed Sheffield-Manchester motorway will not begin for at least 10 years. Before any decision will be taken in the future, routing studies will be conducted and a public inquiry held among those affected.
- The Board has followed up the success of the Goyt Valley experiment with the 'routes for people' project, which will channel different types of traffic onto specifically designated routes, thus minimizing conflicts between different uses and the need for road widening or building.
- A 2 year postgraduate research studentship sponsored by the Board, which was to consider the present status and future potential of woodland and forest land within the broad land use planning framework, was completed by the end of 1974.
- Management Agreement Study, see: 3.5.
- Gradually a programme for the management of some 260 ha of woodland in the ownership of the Board is developed and carried out, aiming at restoration of 'worn' or derelict woodlands on an ecological and landscape basis (Shire Hill, Worm Wood).
- In 1974 the Board became a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.
- Among the 11 potential sites for new water reservoirs investigated by the river and water authorities previous to the renewal of the Diploma in 1971, only one site at the Manifold Valley is still under consideration. The Board is keeping in touch with the situation and is concerned to

- to safeguard the future of this fine upland valley.
- From 1st April 1974 the specific grant from the Department of the Environment was discontinued and replaced by a new Supplementary Grant in aid of national park services generally, not based in actual expenditure during the year but determined in advance on the level of estimated expenditure.

Conclusion

In the lived-in Peak District National Park the conservation of nature, natural resources and landscape is equally important as in national parks elsewhere where the conservation role often predominates, but provisions must here also be made for the need of people who live in the Park, for visitor use and for some use of natural resources. Considering the actual regional setting of the Park, the present situation in the Park and the given material means and legislative possibilities, the Planning Board appears to me to achieve impressive and tangible results. The picture which emerges from my visit is one of a national park which has managed to survive against increasing pressure. This success has been achieved with small resources and sometimes in spite of inadequate powers, and above all with the great efforts by the Board and its collaborators. The Park seems to me to set an excellent example for similar circumstances elsewhere in England as well as for analogous situations arising abroad, for example, in several Western European countries (The Netherlands e.g.). Considering these observations and the fact that the present situation of the Park is satisfying, both as such as well as in respect to the conditions apparently existing at the time of the renewal of the Diploma in 1971, I propose to renew the European Diploma awarded to the Peak District National Park for the second time.