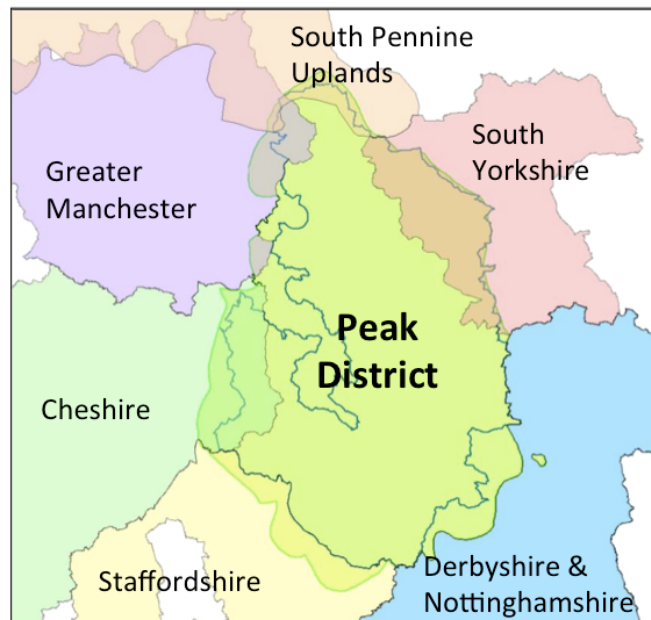


# Connecting your business and the Peak District – exploring the benefits of a Local Nature Partnership

## Business Focus Group Report



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12:00 – 14:00  
Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2012  
Losehill House Hotel, Hope

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Facilitated by Mandy Sims for  
Clearer Thinking



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## Focus Group objectives

The following focus group objectives were agreed.

By the end of the session we will have:

- A better understanding of the proposed Peak District Local Nature Partnership (LNP);
- Explored the benefits to business from being involved with the Peak District LNP;
- Discussed how a Peak District LNP could best work for businesses;
- Been updated on the next steps planned for the Peak District LNP bid to the Government.

## Agenda

The final focus group agenda was as follows:

Time	Session
12:00	Welcome & introductions
	Setting the scene
	Buffet lunch
	What are the benefits and possible limitations to business of the natural environment of the Peak District?
	What could be the value to businesses in the Peak District of a Local Nature Partnership?
	How do you want to be involved?
	What's next?
14:00	Workshop closes

## Attendees

The workshop was attended by:

Name	Organisation
Mark Riches	Assistant Land Agent, United Utilities
Andy McIntosh	Restoration Manager, Central Region, Tarmac
Jane Marsden	Thorpe Farm
Martin Hofman	Wheeldon Trees Farm
Julia Cook	Farming Life Centre
Paul Roden	Losehill House Hotel
Richard May	Moorland Association
Jane Chapman	Head of Environment & Economy - PDNPA
Karen Shelley-Jones	Ecologist (LBAP Coordinator), PDNPA

Apologies were received from:

Amanda Brown (LEADER Coordinator, Derbyshire Economic Partnership), John Mettricks (Mettricks Butchers), Jim Harrison (Thornbridge Hall), Nick Wood (Chatsworth Estate), Andrew Pugh (Visit Peak District), Sue Prince (Beechenhill Farm), Mike Pearson (Yorkshire Water), Alison Jackson-Bass (Eco-Eco), Sarah Helliwell (Upper Booth Farm), and Paul Walker (Dove Valley Centre).






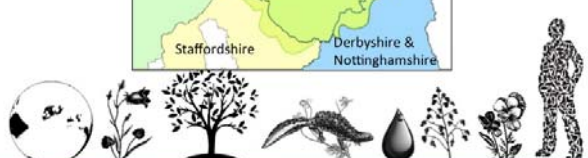

## Welcome & introductions

Jane Chapman, Head of Environment & Economy at the PDNPA welcomed everyone to the focus group, thanked Paul Roden for hosting at Losehill House Hotel, and introduced Mandy Sims who would be facilitating the session.

Mandy began by assuring the group that the focus group was to listen to the sector's thoughts on fundamental aspects of an LNP, not to present a proposal. She clarified the objectives of the session.

## Setting the scene

The key handouts presented are shown below:

<h3>Local Nature Partnerships – What?</h3> <p><b>“A diverse range of individuals, businesses and organisations brought together at a local level to create a vision and plan of action of how the natural environment can be taken into account in decision making”</b></p> <h3>How?</h3> 	<h3>Local Nature Partnerships – Purpose</h3> <p><b>Drive positive change in the local natural environment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➢ Take a strategic view of challenges and opportunities and identify ways to manage the natural environment as a system for the benefit of nature, people and the economy</li></ul> <p><b>Contribute to achieving Gov't environmental objectives locally:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➢ Include the identification of local ecological networks, whilst addressing local priorities</li></ul> <p><b>Become local champions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➢ Influence decision-making relating to the natural environment and its value to social and economic outcomes, through working closely with LAs, LEPs and Health and Wellbeing Boards</li></ul> 
<h3>Local Nature Partnerships – Expectations</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bring together a wide range of sectors and interest groups to agree and align priorities;</li><li>• Develop a shared strategic vision and set ambitions;</li><li>• Have a good picture of the local natural environment;</li><li>• Be sufficiently influential and knowledgeable to raise the profile of the natural environment and its services;</li><li>• Engage in and influence strategic decision making;</li><li>• Involve and empower local people and communities;</li><li>• Have a good overview of activity in the area, build on, galvanise, co-ordinate and integrate.</li></ul> 	<h3>Local Nature Partnerships – The Story So Far...</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• June 2011 – NEWP announced LNP concept</li><li>• End March 2012 – Spend the first half of the funding</li><li>• March - May 2012 – Application for Government recognition of LNP status</li><li>• End June 2012 – complete capacity-building funded phase</li><li>• Summer 2012 – First LNPs announced</li><li>• Late 2012 – Ministerial event for first tranche of LNPs</li></ul> 
<h3>Local Nature Partnerships – Locally</h3>  	<h3>Local Nature Partnership – Local Benefits</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• LNPs will be represented in the governance of the Biodiversity 2020 strategy.</li><li>• Government backing and involvement from agencies (NE, EA, FC).</li><li>• Influencing planning – identify ecological networks and embedding these in planning and policy.</li><li>• Opportunity to make clear connections between ecosystem services and people.</li><li>• Achieving Local Nature Partnership status could support work already ongoing to develop and deliver major initiatives.</li><li>• It could build on this success by forging even stronger links between the private sector, voluntary organisations and government bodies, to secure new resources and stimulate work by partners to deliver on agreed priorities.</li></ul> 

Any **Unknowns or Concerns** were logged onto flipchart:

Unknowns / Concerns – already logged by PDNPA team	Unknowns / Concerns – added during the Q&A session
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unclear timescale</li> <li>Very broad direction from DEFRA on role and remit of LNP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will the overlap work between the different LNPs?</li> <li>What would happen if there were to be no Peak District LNP?</li> </ul>

**What are the benefits and possible limitations to business of the natural environment of the Peak District?**

The questions were:

- What benefits does the natural environment of the Peak District bring to business (or your business)?*
- Are there any limitations that the natural environment brings to business (or your business)?*

Attendees were asked for quick responses to both questions. The responses are recorded below:

<i>What benefits does the natural environment of the Peak District bring to business?</i>	<i>Are there any limitations that the natural environment brings to business?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locality in Central England</li> <li>It's a unique selling point</li> <li>Origin of product – USP - Peak District Park</li> <li>Unique features e.g. climbing, open access, caving</li> <li>Honeypot for visitors</li> <li>Unique selling point and appeal of the landscapes to bring people here to visit</li> <li>Good place to live; good access to cities / people</li> <li>Special and industrial heritage</li> <li>Peak District 'label' protects quality of environment / life</li> <li>Water quality protection</li> <li>An attractive and therapeutic landscape offering much needed opportunities for connection with the natural world</li> <li>Contrast with surrounding areas</li> <li>Fresh air, wildlife, footpaths and easy access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preservation conflicts with development</li> <li>Planning restrictions (inc. small businesses)</li> <li>Land use conflicts</li> <li>Planning restrictions e.g. management plan of PDNPA becomes out of date</li> <li>Planning and development</li> <li>Planning restrictions</li> <li>False planning restrictions</li> <li>It's a finite resource</li> <li>The potential for tensions between the conservation of the natural environment and its 'exploitation' for business</li> <li>Signage restrictions in NP to protect the visual impact</li> <li>Natural environment seen as a constraint on business</li> <li>Bureaucracy of having to go through many different organisations for 'approval' i.e. NPA, NE, EA, etc.</li> </ul>

**What could be the value to businesses in the Peak District of a Local Nature Partnership?**

This was introduced as the main work of the focus group. It was acknowledged that what is known so far about LNPs is limited, but does indicate that they will be a voice to shape strategy and policy; that they will have a role in joining up and aligning priorities across different sectors; and finding shared priorities and efficient ways of working together.

The overarching question was:

- ***What could be the value to businesses in the Peak District of a Local Nature Partnership?***

The subsidiary questions were:

- ***What should it do and how?***
- ***Who should be involved and how should it be structured?***
- ***What could businesses bring to the natural environment through a LNP?***

There followed a free ranging discussion around these questions, this is summarised below.

## Notes from discussion

### ***What should it do and how?***

Planning serves a great purpose and it's a difficult balancing act. It has moved on over time e.g. no longer an insistence that new buildings look like barns. It needs more fluidity whilst still protecting the environment. There appears to be a degree of complexity around planning, which can be a result of overlap with other authorities. The LNP could deal with this inconsistency and odd decision-making.

Landowners sometimes view restrictions placed on their activities/operations by public bodies as unreasonable, and potentially creating other problems such as greater growth of moorland vegetation resulting in increased combustible mass. Could the LNP produce a single agreed plan / policy which is able to over-ride the often differing viewpoints of different quangos to avoid the situation where one body approves a plan while another doesn't?

The key thing is the *landscape scale* – that could make a difference. Makes a more coherent approach, especially with competing businesses.

### ***Who should be involved and how should it be structured?***

There is currently no single place for all interests to come together, the PDNPA has got a role to play as an agreed voice of the different interests.

The National Park Management Plan has an advisory group with an independent chair, this could provide a useful model for the LNP.

The LNP needs a wider representation of farming, but the concept is potentially too nebulous to appeal to many farmers. The title 'Local Nature Partnership' gives the impression of being just about wildlife, rather than the broader issues intended. 'Peak District Partnership' was suggested to show how it encompasses lots of issues.

How can the LNP influence national and European policy? It can only work if there is local policy.

The LNP needs to have some power/a voice and help create consensus. It should help cut through inconsistency, clearer decision making for real benefit not just for box ticking.

### ***What could businesses bring to the natural environment through a LNP?***

Business needs to make profit. Why would it spend money on the natural environment unless it was a win-win situation? However, good business means spending more money – this means more money spent on the environment.

A greater understanding of the needs of businesses in the present and future climate is required. Problems over the last few years include: reduction of number of farms; children of residents struggling to afford to live in the Park; on the western side, there used to be small, mixed farms, now mostly sheep, which is proving unsustainable.

It would be more environmentally friendly to get visitors (to my business) to travel by train, but this is just not possible, it needs money spending on infrastructure.

If the natural environment is improved, what could that do for business? Water purity is improved because it's needed for business purposes, but this benefits natural environment as well. Improving water quality can have two approaches: technological or natural (which brings added benefits), the Sustainable Catchment Management Programme (SCaMP) project has demonstrated the wider benefits of using natural solutions to problems.

Quarries have a finite life. Tarmac is a long-term business with long-term stone quarries. Tarmac's interest is partly altruistic and partly about doing the right thing in order to help with planning issues in the future.

Being seen to be green is good for business.

If a business is on an LNP 'board', then it might encourage 'good behaviours' both within that business and in other businesses – leading by example. Also, if there are big businesses on the LNP, it adds weight to the partnership. If both large and small businesses are represented it would help to increase the dialogue between them.

### **How do you want to be involved?**

The attendees were asked for their preferences relating to their future involvement with the progress of a Peak District LNP, and were also asked to suggest the names of individuals who may wish to be kept informed of or involved in a Peak District LNP.

### **What next? /Conclusion**

Jane Chapman concluded the focus group by outlining the next stages both in the process to continue 'capacity building' and in making an application to DEFRA for recognition of LNP status.

She spoke of the cross-sector seminar to be held in May and assured people that they would receive a specific date and further information about this event in due course.

She warmly thanked all participants in the focus group for their helpful and constructive remarks and suggestions, and once again thanked Paul Roden for his kind hosting of the event.

The workshop ended at 14:00.