



Heather Lowther/ENPA

# *Peak District*





Annual Review\_2004/05

# The Year in Brief

The Peak District was in the media spotlight when we became the first UK national park to launch long-awaited new rights to “walk on the wild side,” bringing public access to moorlands that were previously closed – in some cases for centuries. This was just one feature of a very busy year...

## GREAT LEAP FORWARD FOR WALKERS

The Peak District was the first national park in Britain to launch new access rights for walkers under the historic Countryside and Rights of Way Act, in September 2004.

Overnight, public right of access to the wild uplands more than doubled from 249 sq km to 524 sq km, 37% of the National Park.

We installed some 400 new stiles and gates, 250 new signs and brought in additional rangers to help the public.

Hundreds of guests, including ramblers, ethnically-diverse youth groups, countryside organisations and disabled people, attended a televised launch event in the Goyt Valley.

## PUBLIC HELPS SHAPE FUTURE OF NATIONAL PARK

We launched a review of our policies and services with a series of village meetings throughout the National Park in June-July 2004.

Authority chair Tony Hams and chief executive Jim Dixon heard the public's views on major issues such as conservation, affordable housing, tourism, the local economy, sustaining rural services, transport and how its own performance could be improved.

Other consultation events included a seminar for 11 schools in January when young people had their say on how their lives could be improved in the National Park.

The review is continuing throughout 2005, and the new policies due to be finalised in spring 2006.

## PLANNING AND MINERALS' BUSY YEAR

Our Development Control Service dealt with around 1,300 planning applications and notifications in 2004-05 and received a £124,000 planning delivery grant to help improve its services.

The Peak District has more quarries and mines than any other National Park – nearly 70. Some have planning permission dating back to the 1950s, including Lees Cross and Endcliffe quarries on historic Stanton Moor, where eco-warriors continued to protest against their possible

re-opening. In June 2004 the High Court supported our “dormant” classification, which was confirmed later by the Court of Appeal.

There were other on-going legal cases relating to other quarry-sites, including three on the environmentally sensitive Longstone Edge.

## COMMITTEES STREAMLINED, NEW CHAMPIONS APPOINTED

We introduced a more streamlined and responsive decision-making structure, reducing the number of committees and sub-committees from ten to seven and increasing delegation to officers. To help raise the profile of key issues, a number of members were appointed as “champions” – including affordable housing, transport, regional partnerships, sport & recreation and cultural heritage.

A new Customer Service Team was set up, along with better IT systems.

The improvements are geared towards providing quicker, responsive, high-quality and effective services.

## £250,000 IMPROVEMENT GRANT – A NATIONAL FIRST

The Peak District became the first National Park Authority in the country to be awarded a Capacity Building Fund grant from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The £250,000 grant will involve the Authority working hand-in-hand with local councils to focus on improvements in two key areas: engagement with the community, and building staff leadership skills.

## ACTION TO RELIEVE TRAFFIC-PRESSURE

Transport planners helped draw up potential solutions to mounting pressures on the National Park's roads. They contributed to a new 2005-2015 business plan for the South Pennines Integrated Transport Strategy. Its proposals include possible charging for road-use, traffic restraints on all trans-Pennine routes, the creation of “safe roads” for non-car users, and improved long-distance public transport.

Internally, work began to produce a Green Travel Plan for our staff, members and suppliers, which will encourage environmentally friendly car sharing, cycling, walking and public transport for work-related journeys.



# People

## YOUNG PEOPLE BECOME YOUTH RANGERS

Pupils from schools bordering the National Park were enrolled as Youth Rangers – not only to teach them more about this special area, but also so that they could become ambassadors for the Park in their schools and communities.

The young people learned about navigation, conservation and survival skills, ecological surveying and tourism management.

## WELCOME FOR URBAN, DISABLED AND YOUTH GROUPS

We are reaching out to encourage more people from a diverse range of backgrounds to come and enjoy the Peak District.

During 2004-05 we welcomed many multi-ethnic youth groups and school children from surrounding cities, who learned about conservation and picked up practical skills. In conjunction with other National Parks in the MOSAIC partnership, we hosted conferences, seminars and activities for black and ethnic community leaders to promote wider awareness of what the Parks have to offer.

We also linked with the Ramblers Association to put on guided walks for community groups from deprived inner city areas, introducing them to the notion that it is their National Park, and it is easy to get to.

It also provided guided walks for people with sight, hearing or mobility impairments, along with specially adapted cycles and a mobility scooter at its cycle-hire centres – with some 40,000 hirings.

## FAMILY FUN IN THE NATIONAL PARK

Families were welcomed to the National Park with a range of activities specially designed with children in mind. They included free Family Fun days and walks in woods and beauty spots.

Throughout the year rangers put on walks aimed at families with pushchairs or wheelchairs, using flat routes with accessible gates.

Families appreciated the new £1m Castleton Visitor Centre, officially opened in June 2004, which provides a one-stop shop, not only for information about the area, but also for souvenirs and booking accommodation or entertainment. During the year the National Park's four visitor centres provided information and advice to around 400,000 people.

*The MOSAIC partnership in action*



## LOSEHILL HALL - AWARD-WINNING CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

Our Centre for Environmental Learning, Losehill Hall, near Castleton, has been winning several accolades.

*Brian Blessed opens the Castleton Visitor Centre*

It became Britain's representative on a new Network of European Environmental Training Centres of Excellence, aimed at promoting high-quality training for staff and residents of protected areas such as national parks and other protected areas around Europe.

The 41-bedroom residential centre won an Excellence in England gold award from East Midlands Tourism and a three-diamond rating from the AA for its bed and breakfast accommodation.

One of its proudest environmental contributions was the installation of a biomass boiler (burning woodchips) to provide half its heating needs and cut its CO2 emissions by up to 50 per cent.

## AFFORDABLE HOMES – FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

Affordable housing is a key issue of local concern and although we cannot build homes ourselves, we do grant planning permissions. We have pioneered the policy of limiting most new-build homes to local people in housing need – provided there is no adverse impact on the environment.

Thus, housing associations have won approval with schemes for rent or shared ownership at below normal market-rates: in 2004-05 work began on 42 affordable homes in Bakewell, 12 in Bradwell, three in Parwich, while a further 22 were approved for Tideswell and 10 in Eyam.

## THOUSANDS OF YOUNGSTERS LEARN AND CONTRIBUTE

Around 9,000 school children came on educational visits, to experience the hills, moors, farms and heritage sites of the Peak District.

The Environmental Education Service, based at Losehill Hall, not only introduced youngsters to the National Park's wildlife, history and economy, but also to the ideals behind conservation organisations, contributing to pupils' work within and beyond the National Curriculum. It also helped teachers' lesson-preparation, producing a Lead Rakes CD-Rom Teachers' Pack which provided background to the history of the Peak District lead-mining industry.

In addition, the service carried out outreach work in inner city areas such as Sheffield and organised events with local schools.

# Partnership Working

## VISIT PEAK DISTRICT – TOURISM IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The Visit Peak District partnership continued to raise the area's tourism profile, building on links formed to support the industry after the impact of foot-and-mouth disease in 2001.

Part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund, Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership and the Buxton and Peak District Partnership, Visit Peak District markets the area, with a website, visitor guide, 'what's on' guides and attendance at key exhibitions.

The website, [www.visitpeakdistrict.com](http://www.visitpeakdistrict.com) attracted over 13 million hits during 2004 and the marketing campaigns generated additional visitor spending of £5.3 million in the Peak District.

## BIO-DIVERSITY – PARTNERSHIP WITH VISION

Conservationists and communities, brought together with the common vision of enhancing the environment, are working on the 10-year Peak District Bio-diversity Action Plan (BAP).

Among joint actions underway since the Plan was launched in 2000 are wild-flower seeding to help reverse the steep decline in traditional haymeadows, dry-stone walling, roadside plant surveys, and woodland and dew-pond restoration.

One part of the BAP, the Vision Project, focuses on enhancing the environment in 12 parishes around Longstone Edge where the potential for linking restored wildlife habitats is higher than elsewhere. Community groups, schools and landowners work together with National Park officers on practical conservation schemes.

## MOORS FOR THE FUTURE SHAPES ITS NEW HOME

Moors for the Future – an 11-partner project to rescue globally-important moorland in the north of the Peak District – began planning for a new base in Edale, to be called the Moorland Centre, and a learning centre at Longshaw.

Moors for the Future was launched in 2002 with £4.7m funding, mainly from the Heritage Lottery Fund, to restore rare moorland and blanket bog that was severely eroded by fire, pollution and overgrazing, to carry out research and to improve recreation opportunities and understanding.

*Moors for the Future*

One of the world's rarest habitats, the moor is also important for combating global warming, and conservationists are using helicopters to re-seed and retain moisture.

The partnership consulted widely with Edale residents before finalising plans for the new Moorland Centre. Due to be open during 2006, when new 'green travel plan' measures will be in place, it is intended as a research base as well as an information centre with community facilities.

## FARMERS LAY GROUNDWORK TO HELP DECLINING UPLAND BIRDS

The Peak Birds Project, run jointly by ourselves and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, held a farmland demonstration day to show farmers bird-friendly techniques.

The project aims at halting the decline in species such as lapwing, snipe, curlew, twite and skylark, which have suffered, partly due to changes in farming practices over recent years.

Some £500,000 of grants is available over a 10-year period to arrest the decline, with farmers and landowners creating more bird-favourable habitats.

## FEAST OF PROMOTION FOR PEAK DISTRICT FOODS

Locally produced food and drink were the focus of the Food and Drink in Tourism Project, a partnership between ourselves, University of Derby, Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership and Derbyshire County Council, supported by the European Regional Development Fund.

The project promotes local food-producers and caterers and raises the profile of specialities such as Bakewell puddings and Hartington Stilton.

The group produced a range of leaflets, including "Pedalling Picnics and Biking Banquets" (for walkers and cyclists on trails), and "Savour the Flavour," featuring nearly 100 local food producers, restaurants, pubs, cafes and hotels.

It also staged a competition for chefs, promoted farmers' and country markets, had a major presence at the Derbyshire Food and Drink Fair and Great Peak District Fair, and produced logos for food businesses that support the environment.

## NATIONAL AWARD FOR PARTNERSHIP ON LANDSCAPE-FUNDING

The Landscape Institute, the national body of landscape architects, presented us with one of its 75th anniversary awards for partnership working.

The accolade was for the Peak District Land Management Initiative, a six-year study of a 30 sq km area including 91 farms, that could provide a framework for a national public-funding system for upland agriculture.

Our partners on the initiative included the Countryside Agency, Defra, English Nature, English Heritage, the Forestry Commission, Country Land and Business Association and the NFU.





### LINK-UP GENERATES £80,000 FOR WILDLIFE

£80,000-worth of grants to farmers have been helping conserve wildlife on the internationally important Eastern Moors estate, in a link-up between ourselves and English Nature.

The Authority-owned Big Moor benefited from a payment package through English Nature's Sheep Enhancement Wildlife Scheme, which gave grants to tenant farmers for removing half their sheep and managing the rest to benefit habitats.

Big Moor, above Curbar, is designated by English Nature as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its rare birds, plants, insects and mammals.

We are working towards a target of 95% of SSSIs being in a favourable or recovering condition on our own land by 2010.

This aim includes working with farmers to set sheep-grazing at a sustainable level, and partnerships with Defra and the RSPB on other conservation work, including drain-blocking and creating bird habitats.

# Sustainable Development

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### BRIGHTER OUTLOOK FOR PEAK DISTRICT VILLAGES

The Peak District Community Planning Scheme helped villages get projects off the ground to improve their communities. Grants during the year included £2,500 for new benches at Fenny Bentley, £3,000 to help restore a historic pinfold and water-system at Birchover, £700 for a wildlife pond at Hollinsclough, and £500 for equipment for the Bamford Arts Festival.

### SUPPORT FOR FARMERS

Farmers across the country are adjusting to a new regime of support payments – introduced in January 2005 – which have switched the emphasis from production-subsidies toward the customer and the environment.

Many Peak District farms are changing and developing their businesses in new ways, and we are helping the adjustment by assisting with applications for Environmental Stewardship schemes and offering other agri-environment support.

Some farmers are also gaining assistance from other Authority-led schemes to diversify, for instance into tourism, food processing or retailing, with farm-shops or farmers' markets.

The end-result for the Peak District could be less-intensive farming, providing a benefit for wildlife.

### THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND – A FORCE FOR INNOVATION

The Peak District Sustainable Development Fund – which has awarded £400,000 to more than 80 projects since it started in 2002 – gave out £180,000 during the year.

The Fund supports innovative schemes that help the environment, from an energy-generating water turbine for a village church, to a cooking-oil recycling scheme and a new cycle-route to link Sheffield with the Peak District.



*The award winning Parwich housing scheme*

It also supports new social-improvement schemes such as providing lifts for the rural elderly to the doctor's surgery.

The scheme is funded by Defra and applications are assessed by an independent panel of local representatives, including young people.

## SUPPORTING THE ECONOMY – IN THE BEST ENVIRONMENTAL WAY

One of our duties is to foster the local economy – and we do so with grants, awards and organisational support.

One of our business-support schemes is the New Environmental Economy programme, which started in 2002. By the end of March 2005 it had awarded £260,000. The scheme offers grants for new businesses, products or services of environmental and economic benefit to the National Park.

## SKILLS FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PROJECT LAUNCHED

If more businesses are to become environment-conscious, they need the skills to bring new techniques into practice, and we launched the Skills for Sustainable Business project to provide the training they need.

The project shows businesses how to cut pollution, promote more “green” ways of working and strengthen links with the local community.

Businesses benefit from an environmentally cleaner, more positive image, and can often cut costs through lower energy consumption. They can also learn how to improve teamwork and generate goodwill through community projects.

With funding from the European Social Fund, the £280,000 project aims to provide support and advice to 150 organisations and training and development opportunities for 300 individuals.

## LOSEHILL HALL TAKES A SPECIAL INTEREST IN SUSTAINABLE HOLIDAYS

Our Centre for Environmental Learning at Losehill Hall promoted sustainable holidaymaking with a range of special interest holidays based round the environment of the Peak District.

The holidays use the environment – either as a subject for landscape painting or photography, or as a source for botanical and ecological study-breaks, or as an adventure playground for people who want to learn about anything from archaeology to geology or how to navigate in the wild uplands.

## WELCOME BACK, MONSAL VIADUCT

One of our most high-profile schemes was to restore the famous view of Monsal Viaduct in picturesque Monsal Dale, which had been obscured by trees.

Early in 2005, tree specialists made an agreement with landowners, Chatsworth, to fell about an acre of trees in a sustainable manner which left a shrub and coppice habitat where birds and wildlife could still thrive.

We have now undertaken a 25-year lease of the area to ensure its long-term maintenance.

The Viaduct, built in the 1860s, is a listed building which was once part of Midland Railways’ London to Manchester network. Since the line closed in 1968 the route has become a walking and cycling trail, and the view from Monsal Head is one of the classic panoramas of the Peak District.

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