PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK

Utilities

Headlines

- Over the life of the Core Strategy, the demand for new or replacement utility development has largely remained low, apart from where new development of housing has required connection into existing electricity, gas or water and waste networks. The main exception to this is the increased demand for telecommunications infrastructure.

- The rapid development and uptake of Smartphones has led to greater demand for access to later generation phone signals with the subsequent need for infrastructure updates. It is likely that the rollout of 5G networks will bring additional pressure for more or larger masts to meet this demand.

- Where major electricity distribution networks cross the National Park, it is usually to the detriment of the wider landscape. The Longdendale Valley is a case in point; with high voltage wires emerging from the former railway tunnel at Woodhead Station to be carried along the valley on large pylons. It is a longstanding aspiration of the National Park Authority to see the undergrounding of these high voltage cables.

- A growing population coupled with the effects of climate change may lead to concerns for the longer-term certainty of water supply. The 2018/19 dry spell saw reservoirs within the National Park with extremely depleted reserves of water. This may lead to a call for additional reservoirs both within and on the edge of the National Park.

What has worked well

- **Undergrounding** – there is an acceptance from Utility companies of the visual impact of high voltage power lines on protected landscapes. The National Grid has put forward a plan to underground high voltage cables on the eastern edge of the National Park towards Dunford Bridge. If completed, this project would improve the visual impact of these cables from inside the National Park. The Authority has aspirations for further undergrounding through the Longdendale Valley.

- **Balancing the impacts and benefits of mobile connectivity** – since the adoption of the Core Strategy, the uptake in mobile and smart phone technology has driven the need for greater signal coverage. Whilst much of the telecommunications infrastructure falls under General Permitted Development, the National Parks England and Mobile UK Joint Accord/Memorandum of Understanding, (adopted June 2018) sets out a way of working within national Parks.

- **Strict controls on reservoir development** – The Peak District National Park Local Plan (2001) made it clear in Policy LU2A that "New Reservoirs will not be permitted". There have been no proposals for new reservoirs brought forward over the life of the Plan.

What has not worked so well

- **Broadband connectivity** – The rollout of broadband has not kept pace with demand. The Development management Policies Consultation produced a number of responses citing this as an issue for some communities and remoter dwellings. The effects of Covid-19 may have heightened this issue, with many people relying on internet connectivity for home working, education, communication and shopping

- **Renewable energy** – There is a balance to be struck between the climate benefits of renewable energy and the landscape impacts of the required infrastructure. There may be opportunities to incorporate options for renewable energy in more developments than at the present time

What are the big issues for the Plan review?

- **Water supply** – The predicted growth in population in the National Park's surrounding urban areas is likely to increase demand on water supplies. Similarly, the recent dry spell of spring 2018 through to winter 2019 demonstrated the susceptibility of the water supply to prolonged drought. Such extremes of weather are predicted to increase in frequency under climate change, possibly leading for demand for new water collection and storage facilities within or on the edge of the National Park. Should a new policy on reservoirs be incorporated into the Local Plan? If so, should the approach be to refuse them outright or to safeguard areas where reservoirs might be required in the future?

- **Telecommunications and broadband infrastructure** – The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the increasing importance of telecommunications and broadband connectivity. Changes to the General Permitted Development Order have loosened planning control over telecommunications infrastructure. Further proposed changes in support of rollout of the 5G network are likely to remove some additional control. Should the Authority focus on influencing design and mast sharing etc. rather than the specific mast locations chosen?

What are the big issues for the Plan review? (Continued)

- **Renewable energy** – our policy approach currently only permits small-scale schemes. Should the Authority identify areas where larger scale schemes might be acceptable? Should the policy be widened to include larger scale solar power?