

Peak District National Park Authority – Meet the CEO Event Community Issues Feedback

Venue: Holme Community Centre

Date: 24 October 2024

NPA – National Park Authority

Please be aware feedback briefings will not always include information on personal, individual or private business queries or specific planning applications.

The following responses are based on questions raised at the above meeting with Peak District National Park chief executive, Phil Mulligan. This briefing note responds to the most frequently raised issues and isn't intended to cover all questions raised. Specific queries may be followed up directly with attendees.

You may also wish to review previous event briefing notes, which may cover additional topics of interest.

Q. What's the Authority's objectives regarding trees and woodland creation?

In schemes supported by the Authority an ecological assessment takes place to determine the most suitable native species for the location. This helps the resulting woodland fit into the landscape and complement the existing biodiversity. It also helps to improve the new trees chances of survival. The effects of climate change are taken into account when selecting species and no single species normally makes up more than 50% of the total to improve the resilience of the woodland to changes including the arrival of new diseases.

People who are assisted with tree planting schemes by the Authority can sell the resulting carbon capture into one of the commercial schemes but the authority does not benefit from it. In practice the money currently available through these schemes only covers a small proportion of the cost of establishing trees but owners can register their new woodland in the hope of achieving a higher price in the future.

The impact on landscape is always considered. When considering woodland creation schemes the quality of the agricultural land is also a factor. Agricultural land in the UK is grades from 1 to 5 with 1 being the best and 5 the worst. Virtually all agricultural land in the NP is grade 4 and 5 (90%). Small areas of the white peak are grade 3 and it is very unlikely that these would be selected for tree planting other than shelter belts to improve their agricultural productivity.

In most cases landowners are looking at their less productive land and considering whether it could be converted to woodland. These are often also the best bits for ecology or contain archaeological remains so finding ideal locations for new woodlands can be a balancing act.

Our overall ambition for trees and woodlands in the landscape is set out in the Wooded Landscapes Plan, the latest edition of which is [pending publication](#). Factors such as moorland tree planting are also set out in this document.

Q. What role does the Authority play in tackling wildfire issues?

We are aware that increasingly volatile (i.e. hot and dry) weather patterns and factors such as climate change are likely to lead to an increased risk of wildfires from both accidental ignition (such as BBQ use), but also additional knock-on impacts from fire incidents as a result of deliberate human intervention / arson in the open landscape.

The NPA has convened the regional Fire Operations Group (FOG) since the mid-1990s which includes strategic, tactical and incident-based approaches to tackling fire in the landscape including regular training for rangers, Fire & Rescue Services (FRS) and landowners. This has been brought into play in several major fire incidents within the National Park. FOG also takes a role in measures such as the closure of land during periods of exceptional risk.

Interventions such as Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) for BBQs and open fires currently sit under the jurisdiction of district or country councils and these do exist in several parts of the National Park. NPA rangers do not have powers of enforcement for PSPOs or other similar fines or penalties, but routinely engage in taking action to mitigate for and directly stop fires within our appropriate responsibilities. We also co-support 'fire rangers' which are being trialed in partnership with utility providers. Signage, social media and other public information is also provided regularly during spring and summer risk periods.

Landscape restoration programmes such as the re-wetting of upland peat habitats are understood to help mitigate the impacts of wildfire by maintaining increased moisture levels and reduce more extensive spread of fire over larger areas. Regular research continues into the positive impacts of peatland restoration, and the ground-breaking progress in this area achieved within the Peak District and Pennines can be explored further with the [Moors for the Future Partnership](#).

Q. Where are the educational aims & objectives of the Authority?

The Authority engages in a number of objectives regarding education and engagement, including but necessarily exclusive to:

- Hosting educational (i.e. curriculum-based) visits for young people across all Key Stage levels and higher education, both directly and in partnership with others, e.g. the National Trust
- The creation of classroom-based materials for tutors and leaders
- Acting as a partner in funded programmes such as [Generation Green](#), targeting underrepresented groups
- The development of 'Ambassador' schools and centres; focused on localised champions and custodians of the National Park, through more regular involvement with our education teams
- A Youth Ranger service

The above work is encompassed with an over-arching Diverse Audience Plan.

We are also targeting improving the demographic of our workforce – which has a typically higher mean age, by the creation of an Academy which includes apprenticeships, trainee and placement posts across a wide range of departments.

Q. How is the Authority addressing the ways different communities use the National Park, e.g. since the pandemic.

We are currently analysing large amounts of technical and survey data to provide insights into how the National Park is currently explored and enjoyed by visitors. This will feed into an Authority User Impact Group that will take forward proposed actions, where appropriate, with other partners and stakeholders. There are numerous additional local countryside management groups that regularly meet to discuss actions at a more bespoke level, and the Authority, with

partners, meets twice a year with the police and crime commissioner plus other blue-light representatives.

Q. What is the Authority's role in supporting the maintaining of community assets, e.g. schools, pubs, Sunday Schools etc?

The Authority has limited jurisdiction in most matters of this kind, which are likely to fall under the remit of county or district authorities. We have recently submitted supportive responses in respect of the need for ongoing service provision following bank closures in Bakewell. We have not previously been involved in any issues regarding the closure of educational facilities.

Q. What is the Authority's position regarding holiday lets?

This matter currently falls under other authorities, however we are seeking clarity on greater powers of influence as an NPA in this area, as we fully understand the impact that second homes can have on housing provision for local communities.

Q. What access and 'roaming' rights do National Park users currently have in the Peak District?

Around a third of the Peak District National Park is classed as ['Open Access' land](#), which makes provision under the CROW Act for selected recreational activities which can include roaming outside of designated routes such as footpaths (e.g. walking, climbing, wildlife watching etc). However, a number of specific activities – e.g. wild camping, using areas of active agricultural crops and vehicle access – are not permitted under the act. Legally enforced seasonal restrictions also apply regarding the control of dogs on leads or permitted temporary closures to both foot users and/or dog owners for a range of permitted reasons. Where no Open Access permissions exist, users should remain on official rights of way or other formally designated routes. There are also additional exclusions in respect of farmsteads and private dwellings.

Whilst the Authority is aware of the current legal challenges being undertaken regarding Dartmoor National Park, we are not actively involved in any campaigning or policy discussions in respect of a change in access rights across the Peak District.

Our teams work extensively to help maintain hundreds of miles of rights of way to allow for safe and responsible access to many areas of the National Park.

Q. What planning assistance is available before I submit an application?

[Pre-application advice service: Peak District National Park](#)

Initial FAQs and further information on the pre-application advice service can be found above, or by calling 01629 816200.

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