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16 The local significance of the Peak National Park

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INTRODUCTION

In 1872, the government of the US acquired 809 390 ha in the states of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho and established Yellowstone as the world's first national park. The area was wilderness – vast expanses of lodgepole pine, alpine pastures and high mountains, punctuated by lakes, geyser basins and spectacular waterfalls. Buffalo and grizzly bear were the most noted inhabitants; poachers were the greatest problem, and for many years administration of the Park was left in the solidly competent hands of the US Army.

Compare and contrast the situation in England and Wales in the 1950's. After many years campaigning for the preservation of the countryside and for access to mountains, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act was finally passed in 1949 during the 'golden age' of socialist legislation. In 1950, the Government, acting on the advice of the then National Parks Commission, drew a line on a map around 141 643 ha, including parts of Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire, West Riding and the city of Sheffield and declared the Peak District as Britain's first national park.

None of the land was owned by the nation. All of it was used in some way, sometimes for more than one purpose, and the 40 000 inhabitants counted water gathering and impounding, grouse shooting, mining and quarrying, and cement manufacturing amongst their more traditional farming activities over the Park area. Visitors, especially day visitors, were nothing new – they had been trickling into the Peak since the Duke of Devonshire first opened the turnstiles at Chatsworth House in the 1830's. The spa town of Buxton became a fashionable holiday centre in Victorian times and the railways increased the trickle to a flood

in the 1920's and 30's, when the cheap day excursion brought out hordes of ramblers to Kinder Scout, Monsal Dale and Dovedale. With 18 million people living within 81 km of the Park boundary, the scene was set for the leisure boom of the 1960's, when both active and informal recreation grew to the extent that the 4 million visitors to the Park in 1963 increased to 12 million in 1973.

Against this background, the government required the National Park Authority (NPA) to implement the following objectives:

(i) To protect and improve the landscape of the Park;
(ii) To make provision for visitors to enjoy that landscape;
(iii) To maintain established farming uses and the general social and economic well-being of the Park.

ADMINISTRATION

In order to administer the national park, the Government set up an 'ad hoc' local authority, the Peak Park Planning Board. The Board's constitution was not, however, purely local but was rather a partnership between central government (one third of its membership) and local government (two thirds of its membership). This partnership formula was retained in the re-organisation of 1974, when the Board's membership was increased to 33; 11 appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment and 22 by the constituent County Councils of Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Cheshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire. Of the 22 members, 4 are appointed by Derbyshire to represent District Councils within the Park.

Administration is, therefore, a compromise between local and national interests. National park designation has, however, removed the administration of town and country planning from the normal local planning machinery, and this continues to cause, after 25 years, a feeling of local political antipathy towards the Board. There is a constant demand for greater local involvement in the policy formulation and decision making processes of the Board.

FINANCE

Since 1974, central government has recognised the importance of a substantial contribution towards the total costs of national park administration and management. Following the promises made during the debate on the 'Sandford Report' (Department of the Environment, 1974) that the government would provide the 'lions' share' of the cost of national parks, 75% of the total eligible national park expenditure is now provided by the Exchequer in the form of a special supplementary grant to the general rate support grant paid out to local authorities. Indeed, since the level of grant is calculated against estimated

expenditure, as opposed to actual expenditure, the underspending by some NPA's has resulted in grant levels running as high as 90%. This is not, however, a situation which is expected to last beyond 1977/78, when patterns of expenditure are expected to stabilise.

Nevertheless, the Government's commitment to increased expenditure in national parks since 1974 has provided NPA's with the opportunity to carry out an increasingly varied and widespread programme of conservation works, partly to the benefit of the local community. On the other hand, total expenditure is made up of 75% grant and 25% precept on the 6 constituent authorities referred to above. In order to maintain this proportion, the percentage increase in grant must be matched by a corresponding increase in the precept, and in 1975/76, a real growth of 34% in grant proved hard to match with the constituent authorities pegged to a 4% real growth ceiling. Such events put a great strain on the administrative partnership arrangements.

In the main, however, the net result of the administrative and financial arrangements of 1974 has been a substantial improvement in the national investment in national parks and a proportional reduction in the burden falling on the local ratepayers.

THE FORMULATION OF POLICIES

Since its inception in 1951, the NPA has been the Local Planning Authority for the whole of the Peak Park and has carried out a full range of planning and national park management duties in a comprehensive way. Policies were first set out in the Development Plan in 1959, followed by the First Review in 1969, the Structure Plan in 1976 and the National Park Plan in 1977.

The Structure Plan examines the "physical, social and economic systems of the area so far as they are subject to planning control or influence", and will provide a broad strategic framework for Local Plans and the National Park Plan. The Peak is unique in this respect in that no other national park has sole responsibility for the preparation of a Structure Plan for their area, and no other Structure Plan will be concerned solely with a national park. The National Park Plan shows how the purposes of national park designation can be achieved in the future, and contains more detailed policies and proposals.

The importance of these plans lies in:

(i) Providing clearly defined policies for the future conservation, management and development in the Park;

(ii) Providing a common framework within which all the agencies and individuals concerned can work to achieve the purposes of national park designation;

(iii) Bringing together, in the course of the plan's preparation and policy

formulation, of a wide variety of different interests, through an extensive process of consultation and public participation.

In the Peak Park, therefore, the particular combination of plans provides a framework from the strategic to the detailed and by encompassing planning issues (building construction, land use, mining and quarrying and the social and economic needs of local communities); landscape conservation; and visitor management, they illustrate a significant step towards the 'total approach' to countryside matters recently advocated by the Department of the Environment's (1976a) Countryside Review Committee. In particular these plans emphasise that implementation of policies in the Park is a matter of agreement and common understanding, rather than a matter of legal powers and bureaucratic bull-dozing.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES

The regional situation of the Peak Park, its resources and traditional activities combine to emphasise that conservation in England and Wales can never be a static concept and implementation of the Park's basic objectives must always be considered against this background. The need for 'give and take' was recognised by John Dower in his widely respected pioneering report for the Ministry of Town and Country Planning (1945), but as pressures continued to increase, the government endorsed, in Department of the Environment Circular 4/76 (1976b), the fundamental principle propounded in the 'Sandford Report' (Department of the Environment, 1974), that the public enjoyment of the Parks must be such as "will leave their natural beauty unimpaired for the enjoyment of this and future generations". Where the twin objectives of conservation and public enjoyment are irreconcilable, priority must be given to the conservation of natural beauty.

Generally, policies are implemented in the following ways:

(i) By the control of development under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

The NPA handles approximately 1 000 planning applications each year, dealing with both the strategic and the local. There is no system of delegation to the District Councils within the Park and all decisions are made by the NPA following consultations.

Planning control is, generally, the most effective means of protecting the landscape of the Park, through sifting out and refusing potentially harmful development and also by ensuring sympathetic design, siting and materials for development which is carried out. In this respect, the NPA adopts a positive attitude towards development, and apart from the general policy guidelines contained in the various plans already referred to, has published a comprehensive 'Design Guide' in consultation with local architects, builders and local authorities.

Protection in the face of pressure implies restriction; for new buildings the requirement to use stone or artificial stone adds to development costs. In the local context, the NPA is often accused of being too restrictive in not allowing adequate village expansion and in not allowing cheaper materials to be used to build cheaper houses for 'local people'. Pressures from Sheffield/Chesterfield commuters keep the prices of the housing stock at a relatively high level in the eastern part of the Park. Whilst policies aim to maintain the local communities, planning decisions cannot differentiate between 'local' and 'non-local' and, as in other issues, agreements with the managing party – housing authorities and/or co-operatives – are required to effectively implement the policies.

It is however, in the reconciliation of mineral working with landscape conservation that the Park experiences its greatest problems and raises one of the most strongly contested local issues. The Peak is one of the largest and most accessible mineral fields in the country, producing 5.4 million tonnes of limestone and over 200 000 tonnes of processed fluorspar in 1971. Laporte's, who process fluorspar at the Cavendish Mill near Stoney Middleton, have recently been granted permission, on appeal, to use a 70 acre (28 ha) site at Combs Dale in the Park for tailings disposal; a site that is predicted to satisfy the present needs of the processing plant for 14 years. The national demand for fluorspar and the fears of local unemployment undoubtedly played a large part in the decision. On the western boundary of the Park, a public inquiry into the NPA's refusal to grant ICI Ltd permission to extend the Tunstead Quarry over 240 acres (97 ha) of the Park lasted for 10 weeks. The decision is awaited.

By way of contrast, a great deal of the Park landscape, under farming and forestry, lies outside planning control. The Landscape Areas Special Development Order (LASDO) at present applies to only part of the Park, enabling some control over the design and materials of farm buildings. In the Department of the Environment Circular 4/76 (1976b), there is agreement that LASDO should also cover control of siting and should apply to the whole of every national park. At the same time, the concept of compensation for farmers who are required to incur additional costs in the interests of amenity is introduced, although the opposite principle is, of course, enshrined in the planning legislation which controls most non-farming development. This move, taken together with the farmers claim to be compensated for not ploughing moorland, indicates a potentially effective, albeit costly, approach which is likely to be more widely adopted in the future.

(ii) By agreement between the NPA and a third party, normally involving grant aid or compensation.

When the Peak Park Planning Board began work in 1951, one of its most immediate problems of visitor management was the 'Battle for Kinder Scout'.

Thousands of hectares of moorland were owned by water authorities and grouse shooters and access for hill-walking was fiercely opposed. The mechanism to resolve the bitter conflict between walker and grouse-shooter was the access agreement provisions of the 1949 National Parks Act. In 1955, the first agreement was concluded, and since that time, 19 such agreements have been voluntarily entered into with the NPA covering 19 425 ha. The principle is relatively simple – the landowner and tenants allow the public the right to roam, and in return receive compensation, bye-laws and a ranger service. Agreements are now based on the Countryside Commission's model form and compensation (based on 9.9p per ha consideration, £10 per 100 breeding ewes, £16.2 per km of boundary wall, and £8.4 per km of internal wall) is finalised by the District Valuer and paid annually. Those moorlands which are used for grouse shooting are closed on 12 days each year and extensive publicity and ranger patrols ensure minimum interference with either shoots or walkers. An annual meeting is held between the NPA and all access agreement parties, to resolve problems.

This principle works well, and its extension into the wider field of the management agreement is now being considered. Wager (1976) in a report for the NPA, concluded that this technique could be effective in bringing together the varying, and sometimes conflicting, objectives of the landowner, the tenant(s), the naturalist, rock climbers etc. and the NPA, to produce an agreed management plan as the basis for future action. Compensation, direct works, a ranger service and organised voluntary efforts might form the NPA input. Access to the land, revised grazing regimes and woodland management might form the landowners input. In this way both short term visitor management problems as well as long term landscape management problems might be overcome, with the NPA acting as a catalyst, injecting grants, expertise and manpower into the private sector so that national park objectives, as defined in the National Park Plan, can be achieved on a broad front.

In both these examples, reference has been made to the Ranger Service, which forms a vital link between the Park resident and the Park visitor. In the Peak Park, the Service was developed to patrol the access areas, advising visitors and enforcing bye-laws. Now, under the direction of the Chief Ranger, 11 Field Rangers cover the whole 140 378 ha of the Park, building up the day-to-day liaison with the farmers in particular, advising and guiding visitors, and carrying out a programme of litter clearance, footpath maintenance, including repairs to stiles and gates, waymarking, drystone walling, drainage and fencing. In association with a growing number of volunteers, some of whom are acquiring a good standard of skills, the Rangers are providing a modest level of rural estate work which is welcomed by the farmer in the Park. In this very practical way, the

farmer is beginning to receive some recompense for the problems created by visitor pressures in some areas, and the process forges stronger links and a better understanding of mutual problems between the farmer, the visitor and the NPA.
(iii) By acquisition, development and management by the NPA.

In order to take effective action to promote new approaches to problems, the NPA has consistently taken a positive attitude towards opportunities arising in the Park, and continued opportunism allied to sound policies and programmes, will always be an essential element of Park management. Derelict railways became a 53 km Trails system for cyclists, horseriders or the casual stroller, with several car park access points, but free of vehicular traffic throughout. Derelict quarries, with machinery and buildings cleared away have become picnic areas as at Tideswell Dale or nature conservation sites as at Millers Dale. A disused farm in the Snake Valley is now the Hagg Mountain Hostel and an empty row of cottages in Longdendale were restored to provide the 45 bed Crowden Youth Hostel on the Pennine Way. The caravan and camping sites at Castleton and Hayfield set high standards of design and provision and 304 ha of woodland scattered throughout the Park are managed on a selective felling and group regeneration system.

The importance of these provisions goes beyond the value of the facility itself. They draw problems away from the surrounding area, they provide test beds for new ideas and improve management expertise, they set new standard and they bring back some life and employment to former derelict scenes.

CONCLUSIONS

In the Peak District, the national park designation has had a significant impact on the local scene, through administration, finance and the implementation of Park policies. Taken against the time-scale of landscape change, the super-imposition of the Park administration is still relatively new, and changes are constantly being made to seek more effective co-operation between the 'planners' and the 'planned'.

The early specific problem solving days were replaced by the broader co-ordinated schemes of the late-1960's and early-1970's, when traffic management was increasingly becoming the basis of visitor management schemes such as the Goyt Valley Traffic Management Scheme and 'Routes for People'. Now the trend is towards the joint approach, co-ordinating the many agencies responsible for making things happen within the Park area, and by agreement, persuasion, subsidies, incentives, grants, and controls endeavouring to ensure that Park policies are effectively implemented on a Park-wide basis.

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