

FACT SHEET I:



# The Peak District National Park

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# Did you know...?

- In 1951 the Peak District became Britain's first National Park. Its stunning scenery has been forged by nature over millions of years and by human activities over thousands of years.
- The highest point of the Peak District National Park is 636 metres (2,088 feet) on Kinder Scout.
- The Peak District National Park covers an area of 1,438 square kilometres (555 square miles).
- The area's name comes from 'peac', an Old English word for hill.
- The symbol of the Peak District National Park is a millstone. These can be seen by the roadside on main roads as you enter the Park.
- Every year millions of people visit the Peak District National Park to find peace, tranquillity and adventure.
- More than 16 million people live within an hour's drive of the boundary of the Peak District National Park.
- Around 38,000 people live in the Peak District National Park.
- The rocks of the Peak District are more than 300 million years old.
- More than 90% of the Peak District National Park is privately owned.

The Peak District became Britain's first National Park in 1951. Sandwiched between Sheffield to the east and Manchester to the west, the Peak District National Park lies at the southern tip of the Pennines in the very heart of England. The satellite photograph (right, top), taken at night, shows the lights of cities encircling the National Park.

Covering an area of 1,438 square kilometres (555 square miles), about the same size as Greater London, the Peak District National Park is a protected landscape because of its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and the opportunities it provides for people to enjoy and learn about its special qualities.

Shaped by natural forces over millions of years, and by human activities over thousands of years, the Peak District National Park provides a breathing space for millions of visitors and is home to around 38,000 people. Its name is thought to come from 'peac', an Old English word for hill. The highest point is on the moorland plateau of Kinder Scout at 636 metres (2,088 feet) above sea level.

# What is a National Park?

**National Parks** are beautiful and spectacular places which are specially protected by law. In the early 20th century much of the countryside was owned by wealthy private landowners who jealously guarded their shooting and farming rights, sometimes using force to evict ramblers and others who wanted to enjoy the countryside. Lack of access to the Peak District, surrounded on all sides by large industrial cities, became the focus for growing public anger. On 24 April 1932 some 500 walkers and activists converged on Kinder Scout to assert their right to walk freely over the open moors. Five protesters were arrested and went to jail. The **Kinder Mass Trespass** was a key event in the campaign for better access to the countryside. It paved the way for the National Parks and Access to the Countryside

Act 1949 under which National Parks in England and Wales are designated. The Peak District became Britain's first National Park on 17 April 1951.

There are nine National Parks in England, two in Scotland and three in Wales. The Norfolk and Suffolk Broads is included in the National Parks family although it is not designated as a National Park. Each National Park is managed by a National Park Authority, an independent public body funded by the Government. In 2007-08 the English National Park Authorities received £44.3 million in funding from the Government, of which the Peak District National Park Authority received £7.9 million.

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act set out the purposes of National Park Authorities as:

- conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of National Parks; and
- promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks by the public.

The Environment Act 1995 updated this so that National Park Authorities must also consider the economic and social well-being of local communities. Where the purposes conflict, conservation takes priority. The National Park Authorities work in partnership with many other organisations to achieve these goals.

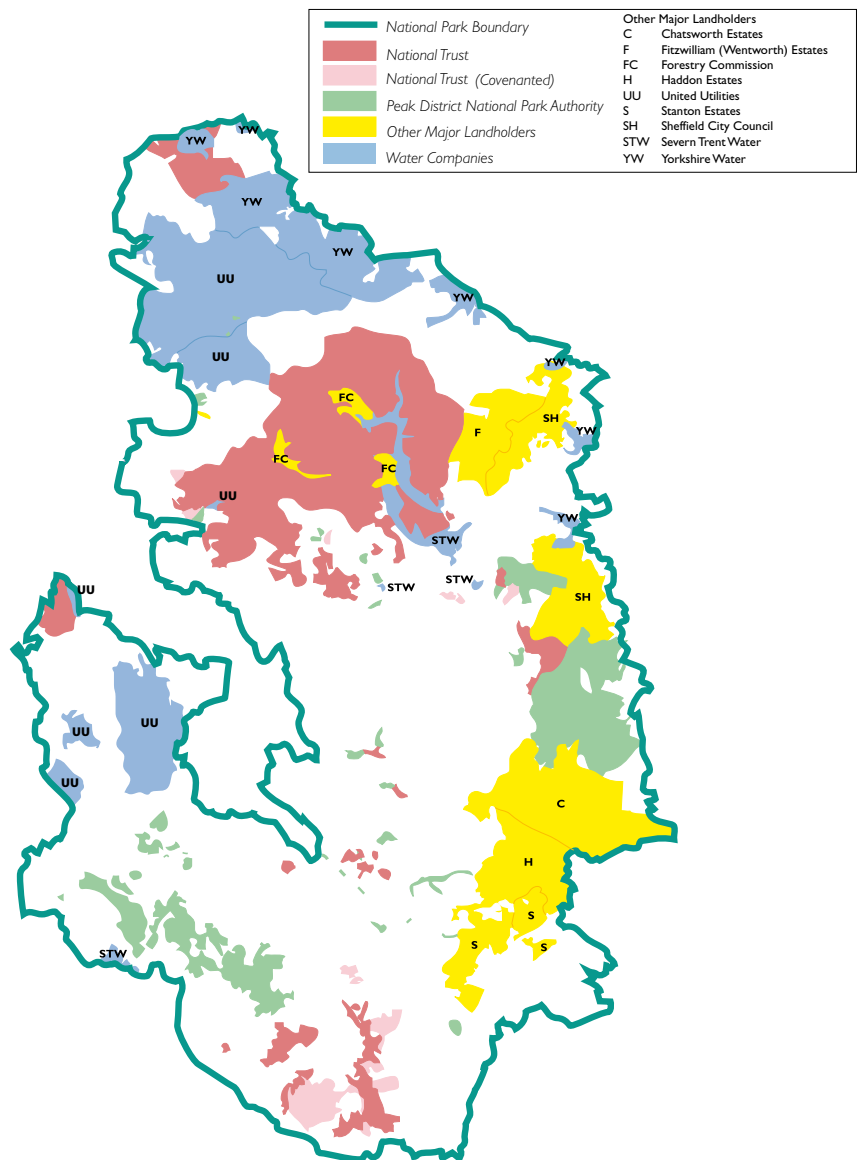
# Who owns the Peak District National Park?

The term 'National Park' is a bit misleading. National Parks in Britain are not owned by the nation. More than 90% of the Peak District National

Park is privately owned. The biggest private landowners are the **National Trust** which owns 12% (17,507 hectares) and three water

companies which own 11% (16,943 hectares).

The Peak District National Park Authority owns just 5% (6,957 hectares).



MAJOR LAND OWNERS MAP

# What is the Peak District National Park Authority?

The National Park Authority is the planning authority for the Peak District National Park. It consists of members and officers. The 30 members are responsible for making policies and setting priorities, and for making sure the Authority operates effectively. The policies are implemented by officers who are employees of the Authority. The Peak District National Park covers parts of four government regions, three County Councils and

nine District, Borough, City and Metropolitan Borough Councils. Each of these organisations is represented by a member. Fourteen members are also appointed directly by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. These are people with valuable knowledge and experience of different aspects of the Peak District.

The National Park Authority acts as the local planning authority and produces strategic,

local and management plans setting out its policies. These policies have to balance the needs of conservation with the needs of the local community [Living In Fact Sheet] (e.g. houses, jobs, services), the needs of visitors [Tourism Fact Sheet] (e.g. car parks, information) and national needs (e.g. minerals extraction [Quarrying and Minerals Extraction Fact Sheet]). Sometimes these will conflict and the Authority must find a solution. The Authority works in partnership with local communities and with many other agencies and organisations.

# A place at the heart of the nation

Around one-third of the population of England, some 16 million people, live within an hour's drive of the boundary, making the Peak

District National Park one of the most accessible National Parks in Britain. It has 10.1 million visitors from England every year.

**The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000** introduced new rights of access to open country throughout England and Wales. As a result of CROW there is now 524 square kilometres (202 square miles) of open access land in the Peak District National Park.

The Peak District National Park



# What is the Peak District National Park Authority?

The International Union for Conservation of Nature designates the Peak District as a Category V protected landscape. This recognises that the cultural and natural aspects of the landscape are inextricably linked, and that the communities living in these landscapes are central to sustaining them.

The Peak District landscape is rich and diverse, having been shaped by both natural forces [Rocks and Minerals Fact Sheet] and human activities. One of its special features is the contrast between the high exposed moorlands of the Dark Peak, the lower lying enclosed farmland of the White Peak, and the valleys, moorlands and rocky edges of the South West Peak.

## THE DARK PEAK

High gritstone moorland and broad flat shale valleys dominate the landscape. Shale is impermeable to water, so

many of the valleys are used as reservoirs. The shale and gritstone rocks were formed from deposits of sand and mud carried by a vast river delta around 326 million years ago.

Much of the high open moorland is covered by a thick layer of peat. As the soil is quite acidic only a few plant species grow (e.g. heather, bilberry, cottongrass). The dark peat soil and rocks give the area its name. Extensive areas of moor are managed for red grouse and for sheep farming, with controlled burning to promote new heather growth. However, areas of ancient oak woodland still survive below the gritstone edges and in steep sided ravines ('cloughs').

The moorlands act like sponges, soaking up the high rainfall and feeding it into streams and rivers.

## THE WHITE PEAK

A landscape of rolling farmland and steep-sided dales, the White Peak lies on the region's oldest exposed rock, limestone. This pale grey-white coloured rock gives the area its name. Like shale and gritstone, limestone is a sedimentary rock. It was

deposited around 360-326 million years ago when the region lay under a shallow tropical sea. The fossilised remains of millions of sea creatures such as crinoids ('sea lilies'), corals and brachiopods that form the limestone can be seen in many of the drystone walls which lace the landscape.

The limestone dales contain ancient woodland and many wild flowers. They were formed during the last Ice Age when glacial melt water eroded the limestone and formed underground streams and caverns.

## THE SOUTH WEST PEAK

The South West Peak is a mosaic of moorland, woodland, gritstone edges and tors, valleys and meadows. The high moorland is dominated by exposed blanket bog and dry heath with gritstone walls enclosing large areas of land crossed by ancient transport routes. Scattered gritstone farmsteads, occasional villages and smaller field systems bounded by wall and hedgerows characterise the lowland valleys and slopes, creating a pastoral landscape.

Gritstone underlies the moorland landscape while shale forms the base for the lowland valleys. The gritstone has been strongly folded in the South West Peak, creating rocky edges and steep slopes. Coal measures have been exposed in some places, such as the Goyt Valley [Goyt Valley Fact Sheet].

With a rainfall of more than 140 centimetres a year, Axe Edge is one of the major watersheds in England. Axe Edge Moor is the source of five rivers – the Dove, Manifold, Goyt, Dane and Wye. The rivers and their tributaries cut steep sided rocky cloughs through the upland landscape which broaden into lowland valleys.

[South West Peak Roaches/SW Peak 2/SW Peak 3]

## LAND USE

### FARMING

Around 86% of the Peak District National Park is classed as farmed land. There are some 2,000 farms in the Peak District National Park of which half are small-holdings (<20 hectares). Farmland is mostly permanent grass (51%) or rough grazing (41%). Dairy cattle are kept on the limestone plateau of the White Peak while sheep and beef cattle are reared on the higher, rough grazing land of the Dark Peak. There are more than 400,000 sheep in the Peak District National Park and 85,000 cattle. Only around 1% of agricultural land is used for crops or left fallow. Farming [Farming Fact Sheet] in the Peak

District depends on agricultural subsidies and many farmers have other jobs, usually related to tourism [Tourism Fact Sheet], to make ends meet.

### FORESTRY

The Peak District National Park Authority looks after more than 150 small woodlands throughout the National Park, covering around 500 hectares. Many of these are striking landscape features situated on hilltops, skylines or beside busy roads. Others are managed for their wildlife value or for public access and recreation. Management includes maintaining stone walls around woodland, thinning out young trees and allowing mature trees to grow as old as possible. All management is carried out by local contractors.

The largest woodlands in the National Park are the plantations owned by the utility companies and the **Forestry Commission**. They are mostly coniferous and are located in the main water catchments of the Dark Peak.

### WATER GATHERING

There are no natural lakes in the Peak District National Park, but its relatively high rainfall (average 100 centimetres a year) and shale valleys (shale is impermeable to water) make it ideal for water gathering. Many shale valleys have been dammed and flooded to create reservoirs to supply surrounding towns and cities such as Sheffield, Manchester, Leicester and Nottingham. The reservoirs of

the Peak District produce 450 million litres of water every day.

### QUARRYING AND MINERALS EXTRACTION

Quarrying and minerals extraction [Quarrying and Minerals Extraction Fact Sheet] in the Peak District dates back to prehistoric times. It has played a big role in shaping the landscape we see today. Gritstone was quarried in the Iron Age to make hand-powered stones to grind grain ('querns'). Later, gritstone was quarried to make millstones for use in water, wind and steam mills, crushing stones for mineral extraction and as grindstones for the Sheffield edge tool industry. Another name for Peak District gritstone is Millstone Grit. There are more than 1,000 discarded millstones scattered in parts of the Peak District National Park, and the millstone is the Park's symbol.

Limestone quarrying grew enormously in scale throughout the 20th century, reaching a peak of 8.5 million tonnes in 1990. In 2007-08 4.4 million tonnes were quarried from within the Park. The limestone is used in the iron, steel and chemical industries, as well as in agriculture and construction.

**Lead ore** was mined by the Romans. The last big lead mine, Millclose Mine at Darley Bridge, closed in 1939. Lead was extracted from galena, one of the minerals found in limestone. Limestone was also quarried by the Romans who used it for building stone and mortar.

In 2008-09 there were 47 'active' quarries in the Peak District National Park covering 3,299 hectares. Around half of these are actively extracting material; the rest are subject to on-going restoration or are not operational for other reasons.

As well as lead, other minerals found in limestone are: fluorspar (calcium fluoride), used to make refrigerants, solvents, anaesthetics and toothpaste; barite (barium sulphate) as an additive to drilling fluids in the oil and gas industry; and calcite (calcium carbonate) for ornamental chippings and finishes.

## PROMOTING CONSERVATION

### NATURE CONSERVATION

There are 54 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) designated by Natural England [www.naturalengland.org.uk] for their national importance for wildlife [Wildlife Fact Sheet] or geology [Rocks and Minerals Fact Sheet] and covering just over 50,000 hectares (35%) of the National Park. Natural England seeks agreements with land owners for SSSIs to be managed to conserve [Conservation Fact Sheet] their special qualities. The main threats to moorland SSSIs are overgrazing, fires and air pollution. Climate change is also starting to have an impact, especially in moorland areas.

Most of the SSSIs have added protection as Natura 2000

sites. The Natura 2000 network applies to Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), established under the EU Birds Directive and Habitats Directive respectively. The Peak District has one SPA, the Peak District Moors (44,842 hectares), and two SACs, the South Pennine Moors (43,642 hectares) and the Peak District Dales (2,160 hectares).

The Peak District National Park also has three National Nature Reserves, Dovedale [Dovedale Fact Sheet], which includes Biggin Dale, Derbyshire Dales which consists of five limestone dales (Cressbrook, Lathkill, Hay, Long and Monk's) and the Kinder Scout plateau.

### The Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ESS),

which encourages farmers and other land owners to conserve ecologically important land, covers 69% of the Peak District National Park. It offers two tiers of support, entry level and higher level. An upland level is being introduced in July 2010, replacing the Hill Farm Allowance Scheme. The ESS replaces the Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme and the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

The Peak District is home to a number of rare fauna and flora. It is the only place in the world where the Derbyshire feather-moss grows. Just one square metre of this incredibly rare plant exists, in a secret location.

Three-quarters of the world's heather moorland is in the UK, with around 19,000 hectares

in the Peak District National Park. It is of global ecological importance, with many rare and endangered plant and animal species.

The Peak District has one of England's largest populations of mountain hare. These animals turn white in winter and can reach speeds of up to 60 km/hr.

### Under the **Peak District Local Biodiversity Action Plan**

15 habitat and seven species action plans have been prepared for those habitats and species at greatest risk. At-risk species include curlew, lapwing, water vole and Derbyshire feather moss. Habitats at risk include limestone dales, lead rakes, **hay meadows** and blanket bog.

### LANDSCAPE AND VILLAGE CONSERVATION

The National Park Authority is primarily responsible for landscape conservation [Conservation Fact Sheet] across the National Park. This includes creating **Conservation Areas** in villages to protect their historical and architectural value. There are 109 Conservation Areas in the Peak District National Park. The Authority also works with **English Heritage** to help identify and designate Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings, and to raise awareness about the importance of historic landscapes. There are some 2,900 Listed Buildings and 457 Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the Peak District National Park.

# Learning and Enjoying

The Peak District National Park attracts millions of visitors [Tourism Fact Sheet] every year. Most visitors (85%) travel in by car. The scenery, peace and tranquillity are the main reasons **why people visit** the Peak District National Park. Visitors contribute nearly £225 million directly to the local economy, and tourism generates around £125 million a year for local businesses.

The Park is popular for holiday homes with some 4% of houses being second homes (compared to 1% in England as a whole).

Many visitors head for beauty spots such as Dovedale [Dovedale Fact Sheet], places of interest such as **Chatsworth House, Haddon Hall** or the caves at Castleton [Castleton Fact Sheet], traditional events such as well dressings, or to see the locations for **films and TV** series such as The Duchess, Pride and Prejudice, League of

Gentlemen and Peak Practice. Adventure-seekers can enjoy hill walking, climbing, caving, sailing, fell-running, windsurfing, canoeing, mountain biking, horse riding and hang- or paragliding. Disused railway lines, such as the Monsal, **Tissington and High Peak Trails**, have been adapted for wheelchair users. The most popular activities are short walks and sightseeing. Not all activities are suitable for all parts of the National Park. For example off-road vehicles can damage footpaths and bridleways, and may cause noise and nuisance. Where there is a conflict the National Park Authority aims to **resolve** it through good management, discussion and dialogue, with conservation the priority.

The **Peak District National Park Ranger Service** provides a key point of contact between the National Park Authority, local people and visitors. Their role includes: leading guided walks, looking after footpaths, caring for wildlife and helping people to enjoy and understand the National Park. They also work with the emergency services, farmers, landowners, schools, disabled groups, young offenders, ecologists and volunteers.

Peak District National Park Visitor Services provides a range of visitor information and interpretation online, in print and at visitor centres to help people enjoy the National Park and understand why the area is so special. There are four Visitor Centres based at Bakewell, Castleton, Edale and Upper Derwent where visitors will find all the information and inspiration they need to experience the National Park and **surrounding area**.

**Losehill Hall**, the Peak District National Park Learning and Environmental Conference Centre based at Castleton, offers a wide range of environmental learning opportunities for people of all ages, including school visits, teacher training, and training and development for environmental professionals. It also offers conference, training and seminar facilities.

# A Place Called Home

The Peak District National Park is home [Living In Fact Sheet] to around 38,000 people, most of whom live in the picturesque villages and hamlets dotted throughout the White Peak. There are an estimated 17,000 dwellings and over 800 holiday homes. About 10% of the population live in Bakewell [Bakewell Fact Sheet], the largest settlement and only market town. Some 34% of National Park residents are in full-time employment, 18% are self-employed and 13% are in part-time jobs. Around 40% work in manufacturing,

trade and other businesses, 21% work in education, health and social care, 7% in catering, and 7% in farming, fishing and forestry. Just over 6% work in construction and less than 2% work in mining and quarrying. Around half of all residents commute to jobs outside the National Park, particularly to Manchester and Sheffield.

There are around 2,800 businesses in the Peak District National Park, employing 14,000 people in 2007. Three-quarters of these are micro-businesses employing less than five people.

Many of the buildings are made of local stone and the National Park Authority provides guidelines on what new buildings should look like so they blend in with the existing built landscape. The Authority carefully examines **planning applications** for new buildings to see whether they are justified (especially outside villages) and ensure they are in keeping with the environment. The Authority encourages the building of **affordable housing** to meet local needs.

# Further information

- Peak District National Park Visitor Enquiry Line:  
01629 816558
- Peak District National Park Rangers: 01629 816290,  
rangers@peakdistrict.gov.uk
- **Friends of the Peak District**
- **Peak District Landscape Character Assessment**
- The Peak District: Landscapes Through Time, John  
Barnatt and Ken Smith, published by Windgather Press,  
June 2004, £17
- **Peak Experience**