

PART 2

A. CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Scope of this Function and Introduction

This function includes:

- Wildlife and landscape conservation through management of moorland, farmland, woodland and trees
- Conservation management of over 5,500 hectares of moorland and farmland and 580 hectares of woodland owned by the Authority

The work of this function contributes mainly to the following 2007-2012 corporate outcomes:

- **A: The landscapes of the National Park are valued for their beauty, character and natural resources and managed to adapt to the effects of climate change**
- **E: Increasing the quality, distinctiveness and resilience of the biodiversity of priority habitats and species consistent with climate change**
- **G: Understanding of the National Park and its special qualities has increased so that people recognise its value, and have the opportunity to make a personal contribution to its sustainable management**
- **J: Sustainable prosperity is achieved through a diverse economy, capitalising on the special and distinctive environment of the National Park**

Our Performance in 2006/07

Overview:

The Biodiversity Action Plan has been a key mechanism for achieving conservation work, in partnership with others. The appointment of a co-ordinator for the Plan facilitated a mid-term review which gives a clearer baseline to view the successes and challenges for biodiversity in the Peak District and provides targets for action to 2010.

Accessibility for advice and grant support for farmers and landowners has increased through the provision of the Peak District Land Management Advisory Service in partnership with Natural England and others. 484 Farm Environment Plans/Higher Level Scheme applications were completed against a background of a constantly changing and evolving Environmental Stewardship process. Our own Environmental Enhancement Scheme was oversubscribed given limitations on the Higher Level Scheme budget.

We are on target to reach 95% favourable or recovering condition status on Sites of Special Scientific Interest on our own land by 2010.

There has been a greater awareness of the economic advantages of environmental management through interest in environmental economy schemes such as the Environmental Quality Mark.

Conservation of our Estates:

- 86% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest on our own properties are in favourable or recovering condition. We failed to reach our 90% target due to delays at the European Union level with processing the Higher Level Scheme application we submitted for Clod Hall Moor
- We continued to manage 150 small woodlands, sold 8 woodlands, acquired 1 and set up a new woodland owners group. We also transferred 13 woodlands from the Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme to the new England Woodland Grant Scheme

Conservation of properties(land) not owned by us:

- 58.6% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest land is in favourable or recovering condition (from 28% in 2003). We continue to work with Natural England on the production and negotiation of 21 moorland management plans for this land and lead the Moors for the Future partnership revegetating extensive areas of degraded eroding moorland

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- 484 Farm Environment Plans for Higher Level Scheme applications were completed; we assisted 40 Entry Level Scheme applications; 8 England Woodland Grant Schemes; advised on 37 classic schemes, put in place 148 National Park conservation agreements securing, for example, 88 hectares of hay meadows, 312 hectares pasture and nearly 2,000 metres of wall restoration
- The Peak Birds Project advised 36 farmers about habitat management for breeding waders, completed 1 Higher Level Scheme and 6 Entry Level Scheme applications, provided funding for 12 scrapes for feeding sites and management of 20 hectares of rush pasture to create ideal breeding habitat for waders
- The Vision Project secured nearly £70,000 SITA Trust (Landfill Communities Fund) funding for haymeadows, ponds and grasslands conservation work and has included significant awareness raising, empowerment and public involvement element, for example local people are taking responsibility for managing 6 informal local nature reserves
- 75% of all National Park Authority agreements with landholders were monitored. A self certification method has been developed and will be introduced in 2007/08

Support to rural business and communities:

- Worked with partners via the Peak District Land Management Advisory Service and Pathfinder to streamline delivery of services to businesses and communities, for example, working on the development of Peak Directions website and re-launching the drop-in centre at Bakewell Agricultural Centre in January 2007
- Worked through the Land Managers Forum, particularly in consideration of development of Upland Entry Level Scheme for Environmental Stewardship
- A task team of members and officers to consider issues around rural delivery has worked both within the Authority and with partners to align future work

Trends in Our Performance During 2005 – 2007

Work towards achievement of 95% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in favourable or recovering condition by 2010 is on target, through work on our own Conservation Properties, work with United Utilities Sustainable Catchment Management Programme, the Moors for the Future Project and work with English Nature and Defra on moorland management plans for these sites elsewhere in the wider Peak District. However the existing and legacy effects of intractable issues such as air pollution may impact on our ability to achieve the target. Natural England recognise that there is a problem and the extent of the impact cannot be reliably estimated at present.

The mid-term review of actions against targets in the Biodiversity Action Plan is complete. Those for moorlands, woodlands and most priority species are broadly on target; those for grasslands and wetlands are below target, reflecting the difficulty in accessing adequate financial incentives for private landowners on farmland habitats. Delivery continues through partnership project work and mainstream agri-environment work. The Vision Project has represented a move from a habitat/species based approach to landscape scale conservation for delivery across a range of Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and priorities, for example, delivering 7% of Peak District targets for hay meadow restoration, 28% of targets for pond creation and additionally contributing to the Authority's community engagement outcomes with 24 walks, 14 talks, 57 school activities, 14 village events, 53 practical conservation tasks and 10 community led projects.

The Peak Birds Project has visited over 230 farms and more than 90 farmers are implementing bird friendly management. Open days have been attended by 180 farmers and land managers, 2 training events have attracted 200 people, 3 project newsletters have been produced and 30 talks given to farmers and wildlife groups.

The New Environmental Economy Programme and the Peak District Environmental Quality Mark continue successfully with the aim of emphasising the importance of the environment to the local economy by using the Peak District environment as a business asset.

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Integrated advice for land managers and guidance on funding for agri-environment schemes continues with key partners. An increasingly targeted Higher Level Scheme means that the majority of farmers will only be able to access Entry Level Scheme which delivers only basic environmental management. This leaves a gap for small high value conservation sites and associated capital works which the National Park's own grant scheme helps to support.

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Grindleford schoolchildren creating a local nature reserve



Re-launch of the Peak District Land Management Advisory Service drop in centre at the Agricultural Business Centre in Bakewell



Getting moorland into favourable condition. A continuing programme of drain blocking, scrape creation and vegetation management resulted in notable biodiversity enhancement.

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Our Priority Activities and Targets 2007/08

Priority level 1

- Ensure conservation and enhancement at a landscape scale incorporating Biodiversity Action Plan and Cultural Heritage Strategy objectives through the development and provision of approved team and project action plans (Key corporate action A1)
- Ensure sustainable management of natural resources of the National Park through input to major project work, delivery of agri-environment schemes and regulatory measures (Key corporate action A3)
- Work with Natural England and other partners through the Peak District Land Management Advisory Service to provide conservation guidance and advice to secure Sites of Special Scientific Land into favourable or recovering condition (Key corporate action E1)
- Conserve, restore and enhance Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species through direct action, influence, advice and regulatory measures (Key corporate action E3)
- Provide a programme of practical conservation projects, education and outreach work to key audiences (Key corporate action G1)
- Brokerage of environmental grant schemes and project work (Key corporate action J3)

Priority level 2

- Work with the Rural Development Agencies and other stakeholders to secure future funding for rural development schemes (building on the work of New Environmental Economy and Environmental Quality Mark) (Key corporate action A2)
- Work through farmers/ landowners and communities to raise awareness of the special qualities of the Peak District landscape (Key corporate action H3)
- Define the authority's role in the development of future rural development schemes in the National Park (Key corporate action J1)

Financial Summary

Conservation of the Natural Environment				
£,000	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Direct revenue expenditure	1,893	1,771		
Capital charges / depreciation	123	129		
Employee costs	1,283	1,059		
Recharged support costs	282	332		
Total Gross Expenditure	3,581	3,290		
Income: Sales Fees and Charges	(258)	(284)		
Income: Other external funding	(1,604)	(1,208)		
Net Expenditure	1,719	1,798		

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A. Conservation of the Natural Environment

NPA COMPARISON					ACHIEVED				TARGET		
2006/07	Top 25%	Range	Ref	Indicator	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	Target Met	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
			NE1 (a & b)	Total area (ha) and percentage of National Park managed in line with NPA conservation objectives	104,618.5 ha 72.73%	102,675.1 ha 71.38%	113,763 ha 79.09%	Green	see footnote*		
			NE2	Number of external consultations completed	488	537	521		n/a	n/a	n/a
				Percentage completed within the required period	100%	100%	100%	Amber	100%	100%	100%
			NA10	Number & percentage of targets in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan assessed to be on target +	Review against targets - awaiting national Biodiversity Action Plan review summer 2006		17 31.5%		n/a	49%	50%
			NA12	How do local partners rate the Natural Environment work of the National Park Authority?	Review Indicator						
			LA14	Number of community projects (groups & individuals)	31	41	34	Green	30	35	37
			LA15	Natural Environment Conservation Projects which promote rural business opportunities:							
				- New Environment Economy	14	27	21**	Red	26	20	See footnote ***
				- Number of jobs • created	10.5	28.2	21.2	Green	15.5	16	***
				• safeguarded	8.5	18	15.5	Green	15	8	***
				- Business and the Environment/Small Scale Tourism- number of exchange visits	2	2	2	Amber	2	2	***
				- Environmental Quality Mark - current awards	29	37	57	Green	40	70	***
			LA18	Percentage of Authority-owned SSSI land in favourable or recovering condition	80%	86%	86%	Red	90.0%	90.0%	92.5%

FOOTNOTES:

* Figure inflated as Defra statistics are based on entire holdings rather than land in agreement. We are trying to improve data to obtain a more accurate figure.

** Outturn lower than target; more larger projects developed than predicted, thus creating more jobs.

*** No further target set as funding only confirmed until 31.3.08.

+ Figures at present are; 17(31.5%) on/exceeded target, 11 (20.4%) significant progress but not on target, 10 (18.5%) not on target, 16 (29.6%) data deficient. We aim to get 9 more on target (49%). These would be conservation of veteran trees, river corridors, hay meadows, limestone heath: restoration of hay meadows and river corridors; expansion of heather moorland, curlew and lapwing.