

Corporate Objectives:

- 1. Increase opportunities for recreational activities especially for our target priority audiences (Priority level 1)*
- 2. Develop our strategic role in sustainable tourism (Priority level 3)*
- 3. Improve the quality and cost effectiveness of the provision of facilities such as car parks and toilets through rationalisation and different models of delivery and funding, including working with partners (Priority level 3)*

The Recreation Strategy and Action Plan for the National Park was launched on 24 April 2010, to guide future activity in this area for both the Authority and our partners.

Over 43,500 customers used the Authority's recreational facilities during 2009/10 (including cycle hire, guided walks/events and campsites), with an increased proportion of people from our priority target audiences. Children and young people accounted for a quarter of users, minority ethnic groups 9.3%, people with a limiting long term illness or disability 4.8% and people from the deprived areas we focus on 3.4%.

The Authority has targeted priority audiences through a number of initiatives such as the Mosaic project, discounts at the Authority's cycle hire centres for disabled people and those arriving by bus using the Wayfarer ticket. We also provided 10 fully supported walks for groups with special needs (in partnership with local health authorities) and 12 'next steps' walks designed as a 'bridge' between the fully supported walks and the mainstream guided walks. We also provided a wheelchair walk, over 250 mainstream guided walks and over 25 walks for groups with specific needs. The annual 2-day event for the group Disabled Ramblers was organised and supported by the Rangers.

Supporting this work is maintenance of the rights of way and access network, with 91% of footpaths and other rights of way assessed as easy to use. Over £30,000 was targeted on a comprehensive programme of path improvements in partnership with Highways Authorities. Over half (58%) of our car park and toilet facilities are in at least satisfactory condition. Codes of conduct are being developed with Derbyshire County Council and the Local Access Forums to promote co-ordinated and positive messages about use of the countryside and rights of way.

We have been focusing on the new cycling initiative, Pedal Peak District, to deliver a cycling route from Matlock to Buxton and have begun work to open up the tunnels on the Monsal Trail. In 2010 this will be fully integrated into a new Trails Management Plan.

The Authority's strategy for managing off-road vehicular activity, in partnership with key partners, continued to be successful. We monitor levels of use on sensitive routes, have provided new signage and developed an e-mail group to communicate directly with 4x4 and trail bike users.

During 2009/10, visitor centres recorded 440,609 visits, an increase of 2.5% from 2008/09. Services and facilities at visitor centres have been improved with new interpretation displays and facilities at Castleton and the Moorland Centre and at Bakewell plans were finalised to improve access within the Centre. We responded to requests from community and target groups to provide material in a variety of formats by developing visitor information online, in print and through electronic media. A new National Park welcome guide targeted at those visiting the countryside for the first time has been produced. The guide incorporates pre visit information to promote understanding and inspire target audiences to visit and enjoy the Park and engage in outdoor recreation pursuits.

The number of Peak District tourism businesses participating in Authority-led tourism schemes has fallen significantly over the year mainly due to the closure of the New Environmental Economy Scheme.

We commented on a range of recreation documents including Sheffield's Green & Open Spaces Strategy, Derbyshire Sport's "Active Derbyshire" and "2012 and Beyond", the draft Recreation Management Strategy for the New Forest, the East Peak Innovation Partnership Cycling Study, Oldham's Supporting Tourism in Saddleworth and the High Peak & Derbyshire Dales Core Strategy.

Looking ahead to 2010/11

We will be further focusing our activity to increase the proportion of users of our facilities from among our target audiences.

Key actions for 2010/11 include:

- *Working with others on infrastructure improvements at recreational hubs and developing 'gateway' sites to the National Park*
- *Developing the cycling infrastructure*
- *Promoting awareness of recreational opportunities to particular target audiences, including evaluations of the success of new initiatives*
- *Reviewing the current Peak District Sustainable Tourism Strategy with stakeholders*
- *Achieving budget savings in car parks and toilets*
- *Developing the maintenance plan and capital strategy*
- *Contribute to partners' action plans including Active Derbyshire, and Derbyshire County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan*

Pedal Peak District

The Peak District has been chosen by the Department of Transport to pilot extending its innovative 'Cycling Towns and Cities' concept into the countryside. The area was eventually chosen because 32% of the UK population lives within 60 miles of the area, and it already has a 58-mile network of cycle trails and cycle-hire centres. There are plans to re-open four old railway tunnels as part of a new cycle trail across the Peak District National Park between Matlock and Buxton rail stations. The whole project could need around £3.8m and the first phase is being supported by £2.25m from the Department of Transport through Cycling England.

This innovative project supports key actions in the Authority's climate change, transport and recreation strategies. The re-opening of the four 400m tunnels would benefit cyclists and walkers on the Monsal Trail. The cycleway will use existing trails wherever possible, linked by road sections. It will create, for the first time, a high-quality, linked rail and cycle route from the cities of the North West (via Buxton) and the Midlands (via Matlock) into the heart of the National Park. It means that visitors will be able to arrive by train and cycle into the heart of the National Park, while residents can cycle to the station to commute into nearby cities, increasing opportunities for sustainable travel and reducing the carbon footprint of visitors and residents alike.

It will also link up existing cycle trails along the former railway routes of the Monsal, High Peak and Tissington Trails. The Park's main town of Bakewell and outlying villages would have designated cycling routes to access the trails. It will create both a spectacular cycling route and a realistic alternative to the car, enabling more people to make healthy choices for themselves and for the environment. It will also benefit local tourism businesses with rail and cycle-based travel packages.