

Letter of response at Gateway 1 (14/07/2022)

Subject: UDVSRO Feedback from update meeting with Peak District National Park Authority

Further to our meeting on the 29th June we wanted to offer a few thoughts on reflection to guide our approach going forward.

From the outset and as a principle we are grateful for the efforts you and the team have made to communicate with us. It is clearly essential to enable to steady passage forwards through what can be a very complex and lengthy process.

However it is with this in mind that we came away with a few concerns that we needed to voice to ensure we get the process right from here on.

While we are grateful for the workshop updates to date we want to be clear that these cannot in themselves be minuted as, or regarded as a formal consultation response from the NPA until we have had sight of clear evidence and options and that we have been able to record our position very clearly at key stages.

As you will appreciate there is a national policy presumption that major infrastructure development should not take place in National Parks other than in exceptional circumstances. Our own adopted Core Strategy 2011 sets out that applications for all major developments should be demonstrated to be in the public interest before being allowed to proceed. Major development will only be permitted following rigorous examination of the criteria in national policy.

Moreover it is a requirement of the Environment Act 1995 that all public bodies, in exercising or performing any function in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park shall have regard to National Park purposes. This means to demonstrate that they have had regard. The high level awareness of the protected landscape status in moving through the early stages of this process is therefore critical. What kind of discussions have taken place to date at a national level to explore options that would avoid the need to harm both statutory purposes of the National Park to the degree that could occur through such a massive intervention in the Upper Derwent?

There is a real danger here that this significant public interest and national policy presumption is being overlooked and assumed and that the Peak District National Park is automatically viewed as the only available location to address the significant water resource issues that you have begun to set out. Apart from the presentation slides you have used at

an early stage, we have actually never yet received any justification case to set this out and this already appears to be driving progress through the early gateways.

We really need to see and put this first stage rationale on record.

STW needs to be in full awareness of the strategic aims of the National Park in terms of our commitment to the conservation of scenic beauty, opportunities to explore and understand the special qualities of the area, to understand the specific impacts and great weight attached to wildlife and heritage and to understand the strengthening policy commitments to eco-system services (e.g. carbon sequestration and water management), biodiversity net gain and overall nature recovery.

STW is well aware of the huge role that the Upper Derwent plays in terms of our second purpose. This area serves as a prime access point for millions to wilder landscapes within reach of millions in our urban conurbations. The treatment and future potential for the impact on these access touchpoints is an equally important principle as the second statutory purpose of the National Park. And clearly the care with which we treat the historic structures and story associated with this landscape is absolutely essential.

In pursuing all these great aims the National Park Authority also has a duty to seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of its communities. So we must be able to show how we are representing their interests in this process. If we can assist with an open process then that will enable a smoother passage through the various stages to come.

We note you were looking towards November time for reviewing options as part of Gateway 2. So it is critical for us to receive and review this significant justification piece before then. It would also be really helpful to understand the key, formal stages moving forward so that we can plan out our need to coordinate formal responses. We aim to assist this by identifying and bringing in a single point of contact. It will also help us to understand the time required for a single planning contact to help us provide timely responses to help you. We are grateful for the positive position from STW with respect to covering our costs on this.

So to summarise, we need:

- A formal justification statement to underpin Gateway 1;
- A clear approval route to identify the key decision stages for formal comment
- A timeline associated with this to help us understand the time we will need to support the process

From this we can:

- Provide a view on the public interest test;

- Ready ourselves for the full process;
- Draw down officer and consultant support to enable timely response at each stage

I trust you recognise the need for and value of the requests set out above and our hope that we can develop a clearer and more efficient process and working dialogue as we progress.

Best wishes

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