

13. ADDITIONAL ISSUE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES DPD – RECREATION HUBS (BJT/A.6101)

Purpose of the report

1. For members to agree a consultation document setting out the Authority's preferred approach for an additional development management issue regarding recreation hubs.

Recommendations

That:

1. **Planning Committee agrees the consultation document for recreation hubs.**
2. **Delegated authority is granted to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Planning Committee to make any minor changes to grammar and presentation prior to public consultation**

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

2. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3. National Parks Vision and Circular 2010

The National Parks Vision and Circular 2010 encourages proactive identification and promotion of new access and recreational opportunities and ways of delivering them whilst taking into account that *'activities which would have an adverse impact on the Parks' special qualities and other people's enjoyment of them may need to be excluded (in order to meet the requirements of section 11A (2) of the 1949 Act)'*.

4. National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports sustainable rural tourism that takes 'account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it' (NPPF paragraph 17 Core Planning Principle).

5. The NPPF states in paragraph 35 that developments should be located and designed to 'give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities'.

6. Core Strategy

In October 2011 the National Park Authority adopted its Core Strategy document with a high level aim by 2026 that *"A network of high quality, sustainable sites and facilities will have encouraged and promoted increased enjoyment and understanding of the National Park by everybody including its residents and surrounding urban communities"*

7. During the summer of 2012 the Peak District National Park Authority consulted on its preferred approaches for development management policy. Since that time follow up discussion has continued with parishes, agents and local authorities in order to make progress on a draft development plan document for publication.

8. National Park Authority Corporate Objective 3b forms part of the headline commitment to “Provide a high quality planning service to the community of the National Park that achieves national park purposes and that is responsive to and contributes to the debate on planning reform nationally and locally” and states that “We will know we have been successful when...our new Development Management Policies are found to be sound and are adopted”.

9. National Park Management Plan

Taking this context and the strategic context of the National Park Management Plan the Authority has begun a process alongside its partners of refreshing the strategic approach to tourism provision in the area. In particular this document focusses on the management and promotion of some key visitor sites and seeks to provide a spatial planning framework to assist a range of partnership projects and programmes driven by the National Park Management Plan 2012-17. Five signature programmes have been developed to promote and deliver the management plan, one of these being:

10. Active in the Outdoors:
Recreation Strategy Action Plan 2013 - 2015

Key Actions:

1. Healthy Lifestyles - Increased participation in recreation enhances overall health and wellbeing
2. Widening Participation - All people have more opportunities to participate
3. Less impact - More responsible visits and less impact on environment and communities in the Peak District National Park

11. Sustainable Transport Action Plan

Sustainable Transport Action Plan was developed in 2012 with the ambition that the:

- National Park is known as a place you can easily and inexpensively travel to and around without a car
- Choice of travel options makes using public transport, walking and cycling more attractive and part of the National Park experience, and there is less reliance on the private car
- Transport infrastructure such as road signs and crash barriers are kept to the minimum, sympathetically designed and in keeping with the environment and valued characteristics of the National Park, while promoting safety
- Innovative travel solutions become part of the attraction of the National Park

One of the short term actions (2012-15) of the plan is to develop a plan for a cycle network for the Peak District

12. Destination Pedal Peak District

- Destination Pedal Peak District is about creating a distinctive Peak District tourism offer centred around the concept of a healthy and sustainable leisure experience in the national park.

- This signature will also focus on the elements of managing a visitor destination in a national park. In the first instance the theme of cycling will be used as a catalyst to demonstrate the benefits of a visit. However, it will also link to other aspects of visits to the national park such as food or heritage.
- In particular, the signature aims to attract more cycle enthusiasts, and to identify strategies for dispersal of cyclists beyond popular destinations.

13. Emerging Cycle Strategy

Recent activity includes successful bids to improve facilities and routes for cycling, but also to promote understanding and enjoyment of the National Park to a wide range of users, such as walkers, horse riders, sightseers etc taking into account that some people know the area well and others may be experiencing the National Park for the first time. In early 2014 the National Park Authority consulted on its draft Cycle Strategy with a stated aim:

“for the Peak District to be one of the great places to cycle ... using the iconic landscapes of the Peak District as the inspiration for a diverse cycling experience for everyone; delivering lasting health, economic and community benefits”.

14. **Background to the issue**

The National Park Authority aspires to achieve internationally recognised standards in conservation and promotion of opportunities for enjoying the special qualities of the protected area. The National Park holds the prestigious award of the Council of Europe diploma which provides assurance to government and its agencies, non-governmental organisations and the public that the National Park Authority is striving to maintain the highest standards of conservation and recreation management, over which there is regular monitoring and review. The National Park Authority is exploring the achievement of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism which is a method of demonstrating and ensuring that sustainable tourism is embedded into the framework.

15. The key issue is to manage, in a sustainable manner, physical points of access into the National Park (gateways) and places within the National Park that attract large numbers of people to enjoy a wide range of visiting and recreational experiences (hubs), providing facilities appropriate to their context and setting given the valued character of the landscape.
16. The document explores the balance inherent in National Park purposes, namely to find and promote opportunities to understand and enjoy the national park in ways which assist the first stated purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
17. A clear spatial policy can also assist the strategy of sustainable tourism by clearly managing the impacts tourism as well as promoting the many and valued characteristics of the area through new and active forms of recreation.
18. As such the consultation document explores a range of options in order to compare and assess the best approach, taking into account the need to:
- Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the area:
 - integrate visitor facilities in accordance with the Landscape Strategy;
 - minimise conflict with the resident communities
 - Provide good facilities and information
 - Provide managed routes and parking areas
 - Promote sustainable transport alternatives to car use

19. **Preferred Approach**

The document sets out a preferred approach based on the stated alternatives and proposes a policy response which focuses on recreation hubs with a countryside location in places that can be developed without harm to the wider landscape. The policy would provide a framework for quality improvements to the facilities and infrastructure at range of locations across the National Park in accordance with the adopted spatial aims and objectives of the Core Strategy and which would facilitate the high level aims of the Authority's Recreation Strategy and its emerging Cycle Strategy. The policy would recognise that there are wide range of recreation hubs across the National Park and on its fringes (including some settlements (e.g. Bakewell, Castleton and Hartington) and more sensitive sites in the open countryside (such as Stanage and the North Lees Estate) but for forward planning purposes a more limited set will be specifically identified for further development and improvement in response to the higher intensity of visitor levels that these sites are likely to experience and the role these locations play in accessing the wider landscape. Preferred locations to be identified in the policy are:

∇ ***Upper Derwent (Fairholmes and Heatherdene), Lyme Park, Longshaw, Chatsworth, Millers Dale, Hartington Station, Parsley Hay, Macclesfield Forest, Goyt Valley, and Waterhouses.***

20. Beyond these locations more limited forms of visitor management may still be acceptable but at a much reduced scale and impact in order to protect the natural assets of the area and to limit the impact on resident communities.

21. Following consultation it is proposed to draw this issue into the Development Management Policies document and identify the preferred locations on the new Policies and Proposals map.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

Financial

22. None

Risk Management

23. None

Sustainability

24. A Sustainability Appraisal will be undertaken to test the preferred approach.

Consultees: Director of Planning, Assistant Director of Policy and Partnerships, Planning Officers, Policy Planners, Transport Policy Team, Area Team Manager (south), Recreation Strategy Officer, Access and Rights of Way Officer, Cycle Hire Team Manager, Visitor Media Supervisor

Comments gathered from internal officer workshop and consultation on draft document used to inform the version at Appendix 1.

Background papers (not previously published)

25. None

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Brian Taylor, Policy Planning Manager, 3 July 2014

Appendices

Appendix 1 – proposed consultation document