

## **Farming in a UK National Park**

### **What is a National Park?**

[www.peakdistrict.org](http://www.peakdistrict.org)

'National Parks are the most beautiful and dramatically different expanses of the country in England and Wales where people can enjoy a wide range of open air recreation.' States the Countryside Agency. Ten National Parks were established during the 1950s and the Broads Authority was established in 1989. More areas are being proposed currently.

The essence of each area was well described in the Sandford Report in 1974 [14] "the striking quality and relative remoteness of much of their scenery, the harmony between human activity and nature that they still display and the opportunities they offer for enjoyment of their own special qualities". The National Parks of England, Wales and soon, Scotland, are a part of a worldwide network of protected areas.



National Parks are run by National Park Authorities. A National Park Authority is a public body made up of two groups of people - members and officers.

The members are the people who make the decisions. They are responsible for setting policies and priorities, ensuring resources are well used and money well spent. They also have to explain what they are doing and why, demonstrating that the Authority is providing a responsive public service.

There are 38 members on the Peak District National Park Authority, none of them are elected directly, 20 represent county, district, city or borough councils. 18 are appointed through the Secretary of State. Of those, 10 are appointed directly because they understand and have specialist knowledge about issues that affect the National Park and 8 represent parish councils.

The officers are employees who work to the policies and carry out the decisions made by the members. On routine matters members ask officers to take decisions directly, in line with agreed policies.

The officers are responsible for the day to day operating of the Authority and their work is broadly divided into four areas: Planning, Conservation and Land Management, Recreation and Administration. These areas often overlap and officers work together to look after the Park and provide a high quality of service

The law requires the National Park Authority to carry out two **statutory purposes**

*To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.*

*To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the Park's special qualities by the public.*

While carrying out these purposes it also has a **duty**

*To seek to foster the economic and social well being of local communities within the National Park.*

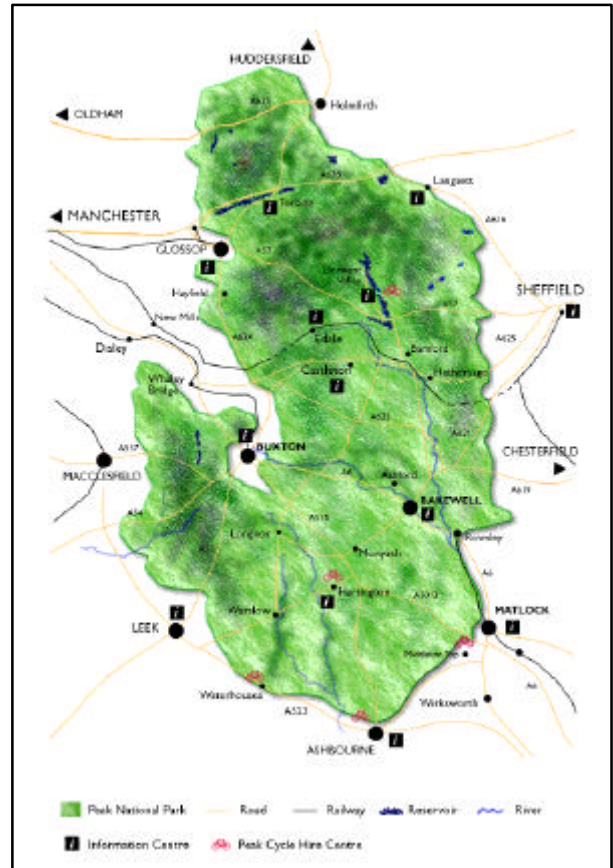
The full Authority meets four times a year. It sets overall strategies on policies and resources and delegates and approves the business of the four main committees and other sub-committees:

Policy, Resources, Planning Control and Park Management.

Farming comes under the Park Management Committee which also deals with conservation, estate management and visitor services, including access, Ranger services, traffic management, forestry, landscape and management agreements, information services and the English National Parks' Study Centre at Losehill Hall.

### ***What is it like to farm in a National Park?***

The special Peak District landscape has developed as a result of thousands of years of farming, in 1951 this was the landscape that was valued and protected. We find farming in the Peak District National Park to be a positive and beneficial experience. The National Park Authority has very able and responsive advisors, specialists, and rangers. They always try and find answers or help farmers with the mountains of bureaucracy that plague us nowadays. The advisors and rangers understand the type of farming practised in the Peak District, they know most of the farmers and often visit.



The relationship between the farmers and the National Park Authority is very important because 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the valuable landscape is privately owned. There are about 2,500 farms in the Peak District National Park. Therefore the special quality of much of the landscape is in farmers' hands.

### ***Does being in a National Park change the way you farm?***

We have chosen to farm organically which is in tune with the natural world and the National Park purposes. However, if we were trying to farm very intensively, creating a lot of waste or damaging the environment we would be in conflict with the purposes of the Authority, although there are no rules or regulations to dictate how we should farm. Above all there are positive incentives to encourage environmentally friendly farming.

Traditionally Peak District fields are small with dry stone wall boundaries. These walls are very important landscape features in the Peak District National Park. To farm intensively it may be deemed necessary to remove stone walls to form bigger fields and accommodate large, modern machinery. This would be seen as destructive to the landscape.

Walls cost money to build and to maintain. Every year walls tumble down because of heavy rain or frost, animals sometimes knock them over and occasionally walkers lose their way and inadvertently damage walls by climbing over. Most farmers like to have a tidy farm, it could be more cost effective to have post and wire fences, but many Peak District farmers try to repair and look after their walls in the traditional way. The National Park Authority encourages farmers to look after walls, woodlands and other special features by providing grants to restore and maintain them. National legislation is in place to stop the removal of hedgerows but this does not apply to stone walls.

### ***Does the landscape make a difference to you?***

We are very lucky to live in such a pleasant place. Every day we appreciate our environment and feel happy and healthy living here. We run a tourism business on our farm and are very pleased that our landscape is protected because our guests come to stay here to enjoy it. We are delighted to be able to share our environment with the people who come to visit. Our guests appreciate the special qualities of the area. We like to show it off because we are proud of it. For us the landscape is an important part of our lives and business.

### ***How can caring for the landscape earn money?***

We look after the landscape because we appreciate it, but also because it provides some of our income, so for us, our environment also has a monetary value, which makes it well worth caring for. We designed a farm trail at Beechenhill to enhance some landscape features and share information and understanding about our environment. Our guests enjoy being able to explore and learn about our farm and landscape. 70% of our guests return many times and are always keen to see the new developments on the farm, from the new dry stone wall along the drive to the trees planted in the Millennium avenue.

### ***Are there special grants for National Park farmers?***

Being in a National Park means farmers and landowners are eligible for special grant schemes:

- Forestry Commission Challenge Fund for National Parks in England and Wales, farmers and landowners can receive up to 100% funding for extensions to native woodlands.
- Peak District National Park Authority's Farm Conservation Grant Scheme can fund land management such as the construction of species rich hay meadows or capital works such as pond restoration, tree planting and boundary walls.
- The Ministry of Agriculture's Countryside Stewardship scheme is available nationally but the Peak District is a special target area.
- The Ministry of Agriculture's Environmentally Sensitive Area Schemes exist in the North and South-west of the Peak District.

### ***Are there things you are not allowed to do in the National Park?***

Farming in a National Park doesn't mean we are prohibited from doing anything but we are encouraged to farm sensitively. The only extra constraints are in planning. Extra care is taken to ensure that any changes to buildings or any developments comply with the National Park policies, which are based on the statutory purposes:

To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the Park's special qualities by the public.

However there are grants for work on listed buildings (those identified as being of special architectural or historical interest). Grants may also be available for work to unlisted buildings in special conservation areas.

***To sum up***

It can be very confusing for farmers to know what is available, new grant schemes may appear or existing ones change. It is always useful to contact National Park staff for technical expertise and advice. Through voluntary agreements and positive incentives the Park staff work with farmers to help look after this special landscape.