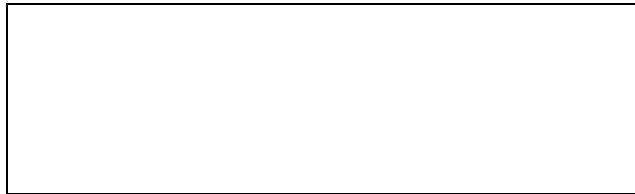


PEAK DISTRICT TOURISM FORUM

Sustainable Tourism Strategy

March 2000



PEAK DISTRICT SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the aims, vision, strategic objectives and suggested actions for a Peak District Sustainable Tourism Strategy.
- 1.2 The strategy has been produced in response to the recent downturn in the Peak District economy and recognises that sustainable tourism can play a key part in the economic regeneration of the area.
- 1.3 This strategy is a starting point developed and supported by DCC, DDDC, HETB, HPBC, the PDNPA, the PDRDP, SCC & SMDC. It is accepted that there will be a continuing need, for the strategy's ongoing development and implementation, for wider consultation with, and involvement of, the local community and public, private and voluntary sector organisations.
- 1.4 The area to which the strategy relates at present is based upon the area previously designated by the Peak Tourism Forum. This includes the Peak District National Park, the Borough of High Peak and those areas covered by the other partner authorities and defined by them as being within the Peak District.
- 1.5 The strategy will be used to harness new sources of funding which are likely to be available through the Single Regeneration Budgets, Objective 2 and Objective 5b transitional funding, Leader and the Rural Development Regulation funding. It recognises that these funding opportunities, linked to specific area boundaries, will enable action to occur in some parts of the Peak District but not in others. One of the key challenges is, therefore, how to progress the objectives in parts of the Peak District where funding is not currently accessible.
- 1.6 The strategy will be co-ordinated through the Peak District Rural Development Partnership and will link into the Regional Development Agencies' Economic Development Strategies. Appendix One shows a proposed management structure for implementing the strategy

2. Social and Economic Context

- 2.1 The Peak District faces potentially dramatic changes and challenges. The area is too dependent upon traditional and declining industries such as agriculture, quarrying, mining, engineering and textiles with declining employment opportunities.
- 2.2 The traditional upland agricultural economy is threatened by the impact of health scares, such as BSE, and even more significantly, by fundamental changes in the global economy which are likely to manifest themselves in a major reduction in Government and European subsidies for agriculture. Alternative, economically viable, solutions need to be found to managing upland landscapes and sustaining their communities.

- 2.3 New technology, environmental and service industries are also under-represented within the Peak District economy and the area seriously underperforms against national training targets.
- 2.4 Even Tourism, one of the major economic providers in the Peak District, is also performing poorly relative to other National Parks and major tourism areas. The area is poorly branded and there are few products uniquely associated with the special qualities of the area. The economic potential of the outstanding quality of the Peak District landscape is not being realised.
- 2.5 The impact of these factors in the local economy has serious implications for a significant minority of the local population. Recent research for local partners, including field research by MORI (1999), has shown :
- 3000 jobs lost over the past 12 months in engineering, quarrying and mining, textiles and ceramics
 - 25% of all workers earn less than £10,400 pa
 - 19% of all households have a total annual income of less than £10,400 pa
 - the area suffers a continuous loss of its young people due to expensive housing and lack of opportunity and an increasing substitution by older people
 - those in work do work excessively long hours with five times the national average working more than 40 hours per week and 11% of all workers working in excess of 80 hours per week

3. Environmental Context

- 3.1 The built and 'natural' environment of the Peak District are widely recognised for their outstanding quality and much of the area is designated as a national park. However, many of the special qualities of the area are under threat. For example, changes in agricultural practice, which have been influenced through public policies and programmes, have resulted in the loss of farm buildings and 75% of the area's flower rich hay meadows in the last ten years. Similarly, in the towns and villages the quality of the environment is threatened by fundamental economic changes which affect the level of investment and development.

4. Sustainable Development and Tourism: The Challenge for the Future

- 4.1 The major challenge facing all of the stakeholders is how to bring about a transition to a broader-based rural economy which provides much greater benefits for the local population but which is more clearly rooted in, or complementary to, the sustainable use of the area's special qualities.
- 4.2 Using "sustainability" in a social and economic, as well as an environmental context, we need to build an economy that depends upon and contributes to the conservation of the unique qualities of the Peak District, which improves the quality of life for the local community and which promotes opportunities for public enjoyment and understanding.
- 4.3 Tourism provides one of the key opportunities for achieving this goal and there can be few industries so wholly dependent upon the need to conserve the area's unique selling point – its environmental quality.

- 4.4 People visit the area for its outstanding countryside, the opportunities it provides for quiet enjoyment, the great diversity of landscapes, its market towns and villages, its cultural events and history and the internationally important wildlife.
- 4.5 Tourism already offers major economic benefits for the Peak District and, increasingly, local farmers are diversifying into tourism (with a recent ADAS survey showing that 65% of farmers see benefits from tourism in the future). The tourism industry is one of the main employers and both directly and indirectly supports shops, banks and many other essential rural and town services. It thereby contributes, significantly, to the quality of life of the local communities through its ability to maintain and attract inward investment.
- 4.6 However, although proximity to the major conurbations of central England attracts large numbers of visitors each year (with over 22 million day visit equivalents each year to The National Park making it the second most visited in the world), visitor spend is the lowest of any National Park in England and Wales and benefits to the local communities tend to be highly localised and seasonal.
- 4.7 There is also little attempt to co-ordinate tourism in the Peak District, and much duplication of resources, and gaps in provision, occur. The industry is also perceived to offer mainly part-time, seasonal and low paid work and local people have little say in how tourism develops in their area. There is a need to improve career development, training and re-skilling opportunities.
- 4.8 We cannot just assume that tourism will continue to be one of the mainstays of the local economy. National trends suggest a small decline in the domestic tourist accommodation market, huge changes in the way visitors choose and book holidays, and far greater demand for uniqueness, variety and quality. We also have to realise that we are facing increasingly sophisticated competition from both other domestic and overseas destinations
- 4.9 It is therefore clear that we need to work together to develop an integrated approach to managing tourism in the Peak District and to ensuring that the quality of our total tourism “product” meets or exceeds, visitor expectations. The approach has to be based upon longer term planning and partnership. It must involve local communities and stakeholders, support the local economy, recognise the diversity of the area, conserve and enhance the special qualities of the Peak District countryside, use resources sustainably and promote learning and skills development.

5. A strategy for Sustainable Tourism in the Peak District

- 5.1 The aims of the proposed strategy (inter alia) are:
 - (a) to increase visitor spend and maximise the local benefits of that spend,
 - (b) to encourage visitors to stay longer,
 - (c) to encourage visits throughout the year,
 - (d) to attract new visitors (with potential spending power) where appropriate,

- (e) to reduce dependency upon the car when visiting the area,
- (f) to deliver for local people and not just visitors,
- (g) to conserve the landscape, including the towns and villages, and their special qualities,
- (h) to enhance visitor enjoyment and understanding of the market towns and rural areas,
- (i) to ensure that the traditional enjoyment of the Peak District will be more accessible to a wider range of people
- (j) to encourage best use of existing resources

6. The Vision

6.1 The strategy promotes a vision for tourism in the Peak District which proposes that:

6.1.1 **A Peak District Sustainable Tourism Partnership** will be established with the local authorities and the Regional Tourist Board, working through the Peak District Rural Development Partnership. The partnership will aim to guide the implementation of the strategy and will set-up a programme of joint working initiatives with private and voluntary sector partners.

6.1.2 **Co-ordinated programmes of work** will seek to maximise inward investment, in particular European funding, and to support and influence Government and Regional Development Agency policies.

6.1.3 **The 'Peak District' brand and a joint marketing approach will be adopted and promoted.** Information and interpretation will be co-ordinated and Peak District-wide standards will be developed.

6.1.4 Wherever practical and relevant, **the local infrastructure will be improved** through more effective integrated planning for sustainable tourism **using town, village and area-based plans and programmes of action,** developed by local communities and the partner organisations. These plans will aim to:

- (a) conserve the natural and cultural heritage of the whole area
- (b) promote the regeneration of the town centres and villages
- (c) improve the condition of, and access to, the local footpath and bridleway network
- (d) improve the quality and range of existing and new tourism facilities and services
- (e) improve local services
- (f) improve public transport facilities and services
- (g) encourage innovation, development and marketing of locally produced products which celebrate the uniqueness of the area and help conserve its special qualities
- (h) improve access to information and interpretation about the local area

- (i) appropriately market and promote the local area.

6.1.5 **Locally produced goods and services that reflect the uniqueness of the area and help conserve its special qualities**, will supply the local restaurants, the visitor attractions and shops and, in themselves, attract visitors. Local businesses will thereby have greater opportunities to create wealth and jobs, based upon tourism.

6.1.6 **Training and career development opportunities for local people**, especially the young, who would otherwise move from the area will be created within the tourism industry, linked to the Derby University proposed tourism centre of excellence in Buxton.

6.1.7 The key elements in the vision, set out above, are developed in more detail as strategic objectives and suggested actions.

7. **Monitoring**

7.1 Tourism indicators will need to be developed to measure the impact of this strategy. Some key indicators will be related primarily to other areas of activity, e.g. environmental conservation, transport etc. However, the following are obvious indicators related to visitor activity, best value indicators and the economic impact of the tourism sector:

- (a) Number of people employed in tourism related businesses.
- (b) Number of products based upon local resources
- (c) Number of quality marque businesses
- (d) Average length of visitor stay
- (e) Average visitor spend
- (f) Average travel time
- (g) Public transport use by visitor
- (h) Public perception of quality of experience and value of tourism in Peak District
- (i) Number of new tourism related businesses and success rates
- (j) Average pay levels for employees
- (k) Skill levels in tourism sector
- (l) Visitor numbers
- (m) Accommodation availability and occupancy

Strategic Objectives

Objective 1

To work with local communities and other organisations to improve the infrastructure for sustainable tourism in their villages and towns through:

- a) Using facilitators/development workers to assist communities in developing plans, for their village or area, that address the social, economic and environmental implications of tourism.
- b) Targeting funding resources that will enable communities and other organisations to implement the plans.
- c) Enabling local community-led initiatives that promote the special quality of the area.

Objective 2

To improve the opportunity for business innovation, development and marketing of locally produced products based upon local resources that celebrate and help conserve the special qualities of the area and benefit the tourism industry through:

- a) Extending the Peak Rural Opportunities and other sustainable tourism funding initiatives.
- b) Enabling the development of 'green' business networks to enable local tourism businesses to share good practice, exchange information and promote 'greening' the industry through use of alternative energy, renewable resources, public transport, waste management and local produce.
- c) Encouraging the development, promotion and sales of niche products, including creating co-operation and partnerships which promote/benefit the special qualities of the Peak District.
- d) Integrating and networking tourism businesses across the Peak District.
- e) Using redundant buildings for appropriate tourism development and undertaking an off-farm redundant buildings survey and initiative.
- f) Developing a Peak District quality marque awarded to businesses which help conserve the special qualities of the Peak District
- g) Promoting environmental quality marques, e.g. the Green Globe to encourage tourism operators to demonstrate good practice in sustainable tourism.

Objective 3

To improve training and career development opportunities in the tourism sector through:

- a) Working with Derby University to develop and promote the Tourism and Catering School of Excellence at Buxton, recognising the indirect benefits for the area.

- b) Promoting networking between training providers and the tourism businesses.
- c) Undertaking a training needs analysis of the tourism industry and identifying a programme of training to meet this need.
- d) Promoting transfer of good practice in the Peak District to other areas and vice versa.
- e) Promoting tourism-related professional qualifications in the Peak District.
- f) Developing Losehill Hall, the National Park Study Centre, as a model of good sustainable tourism practice.

Objective 4

To improve marketing and promotion of the Peak District through:

- a) Undertaking a marketing review, and identifying and addressing areas of duplication and the gaps in the range of promotional materials.
- b) Developing a Peak District brand and market-led marketing campaign that can be adopted by the tourism industry to help promote the area and increase visitor spend and length of stay.
- c) Working with the Heart of England Tourist Board and relevant local authorities, to fulfil the potential of the Peak District as a leading brand in the Heart of England area.
- d) Addressing the seasonal nature of the current tourism product.

Objective 5

To improve the gathering, interpretation, provision and use of information through:

- a) Developing a database-led destination management system incorporating electronic booking systems for tourist accommodation, public transport, events and attractions and a network of electronic information sites, for visitors and local communities, throughout the Peak District.
- b) Developing a Peak District Tourist Information website.
- c) Developing the Peak District Interpretation project, including production of local interpretation plans in Buxton and Bakewell, the market towns and key areas and villages.
- d) Developing an information distribution network to increase the effectiveness of information provision by accommodation providers, visitor attractions and others.
- e) Working with the Highway Authorities to improve appropriate tourism signing.

Objective 6

To promote schemes that enable visitors to contribute positively to the sustainable management of the Peak District through:

- a) Developing and supporting fund-raising campaigns that harness visitor spend.
- b) Promoting visitor pay-back schemes.
- c) Promoting conservation volunteering opportunities.

Objective 7

To improve the quality and range of tourism services and products through:

- a) Promoting the new National grading schemes for accommodation and attractions.
- b) Identifying and seeking to meet accommodation needs, opportunities and market demand.
- c) Promoting farm holidays and accommodation, especially farm buildings of conservation value.
- d) Encouraging the use of redundant buildings of conservation value for visitor accommodation, where appropriate.
- e) Working continually to improve the level of hospitality provided to visitors to the area.

Objective 8

To increase uptake in use of public transport by visitors through:

- a) Producing, promoting and disseminating regularly-updated Peak District public transport maps and guides.
- b) Ensuring that regular public transport services link the major heritage trails and walking and cycling routes.
- c) Encouraging and developing specialist and guided tourist services which enable visitors to access specific areas, or experience the story, of the Peak District from a range of transport services.
- d) Lobbying for, and promoting, integrated public transport services to (and within) the Peak District.
- e) Promoting integrated holiday packages linked to use of public transport from the main cities from which visitors originate.
- f) Promoting a range of incentives for public transport users and providers.
- g) Promoting “park and ride” opportunities.

Objective 9

To promote the effective co-ordination of tourism through:

- a) Extending the role of the Peak District Rural Development Partnership to provide policy and strategic guidance in the future development of the strategy.
- b) Developing a 'Tourism Management Group' working to the PDRDP, with a remit to co-ordinate the development and implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy (for structure see Appendix 1).
- c) Creating a jointly funded Peak District Tourism Office to facilitate the co-ordination and implementation of key projects and generate funding to help implement the strategy. (This new resource will be funded substantially through new external funding programmes at no extra cost to the partners.)
- d) Organising an annual Peak District Tourism Forum to bring together the local communities, the tourism industry, local government and the agencies to monitor progress and plan future action.

Objective 10

To create a co-ordinated programme of research and monitoring of the social and economic impacts of tourism through:

- a) Developing and implementing a five year programme of research and monitoring, including common performance indicators.
- b) Improving links with Higher and Further Education institutes actively involved in researching tourism and developing tourism-related training opportunities in the Peak District.

Objective 11

To ensure that policy and decision-makers and funding providers are aware of the importance of sustainable tourism as a key factor in the economic regeneration of the Peak District and its sustainable management through:

- a) Creating an effective lobbying partnership that can influence the development of tourism, and relevant policies, at local, regional and national levels.
- b) Organising campaigns targeted at the Regional Development Agencies and other key regional policy-making and funding bodies.
- c) Promoting National Park Management, Structure and Local Plans and other relevant plans and programmes.
- d) Contributing to the All Party National Parks Parliamentarians Group.
- e) Creating a platform for local community groups and individuals to influence the development of sustainable tourism through the capacity-building role of the village agents and others.

APPENDIX ONE

The chart below shows the proposed management structure for the implementation of the strategy.

