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**PEAK
DISTRICT
NATIONAL
PARK**

Parishes Bulletin 39

11 March 2021

Preparing for Summer

Welcome to this latest Parishes Bulletin, which arrives as we anticipate the start of returning to a life more familiar to us all in the coming weeks as the road map out of lockdown progresses.

As a result of the further relaxation of restrictions during April and May, we are expecting a significant increase in visitors. This is likely due to several factors; including the new found appreciation of our natural environment and a lack of opportunities along with a delay in the influence of leisure time and holidays abroad. This presents many opportunities as well as challenges as we work together to make sure that this happens in a way that supports the special qualities of the National Park.

We recognise the important role that the Peak District National Park has for the communities that live in, and around it, to provide breathing spaces and a place for quiet recreation that supports their physical and mental wellbeing. After a very difficult 12 months we need to work together to ensure everyone has a chance to benefit from what our protected landscapes have to offer.

The Authority is a relatively small organisation and much of our work is in partnership with the many agencies, landowners and communities who also work to look after the landscape of the National Park, such as the Parishes Forum.

The Authority will continue to monitor and patrol the National Park, with particular emphasis on the busiest visitor locations. Our focus continues to be on providing information to visitors and managing certain locations to prevent issues such as traffic congestion, wild camping and fire risk amongst others. Our staff do not have powers to enforce regulations and laws but work closely with agencies such as the police that do.

We are already working closely with those who have responsibilities for supporting visitor engagement and management in the Peak District. We have set up multi-agency coordination groups across both visitor planning and communications, to help us prepare for the easing of lockdown so we can collectively work to mitigate impacts and welcome people who come to enjoy the countryside with respect. We are also liaising regularly with National Parks across the UK who share many of the same challenges and this provides a chance to recognise and where viable, employ good practice from other regions.

The management of visitors will continue throughout the summer and as last year we would like to hear from the parishes about the partnership measures in place and whether these have alleviated some of the pressures communities may have felt. If you have any points you wish to raise, please email policy@peakdistrict.gov.uk

Visitor management

Car parks and toilet provision

All our car parks and toilets continue to be open (unless contained within a building restricted by wider Covid-19 measures, e.g. shops/visitor centres). We are working to increase litter collections as needed.

Public-participation events on Authority-managed property

The authority will not be granting permission for public participation events to run on its own property during March. A decision on whether this restriction will be maintained into April will be informed by visitor numbers observed during March.

Transport across the National Park/Car Parking

This year due to Covid-19 restrictions and reduced confidence in public transport we are expecting many people to travel to the Peak District by car. Last year we saw the issues this caused and have worked with the highways authorities to manage this by providing car park information, implementing double yellow lines where appropriate in areas like the Upper Derwent, Upper Padley and Thorpe/Dovedale. Linked to this the police and highways have been actively enforcing parking restrictions.

The highways authorities are again looking at other areas where temporary double yellow lines could be deployed and are already planning to actively enforce these at busy times. Officers are in regular contact with the colleagues in the police and highway authorities about traffic management.

To provide an alternative to the car and boost confidence in public transport we are in discussion again with Stagecoach and actively planning to bring back the Hope Valley Explorer visitor bus. We have protected our funding for the service and aim to see the service return during the summer holiday period and through to October this year. This will again link up the sites in the Upper Derwent down to the Hope Valley and through to Castleton and the Blue John Mine. We still believe that well connected and integrated travel options can help both promote great experiences but also mitigate some of the impact of private car use and encourage a better way forward in future.

Pop up Car Parks and Camp sites

One way to ease the demand for car parking has been to provide pop up car parks using the extended 56 day rule. We will be providing some best practice guidance around this and hope that you as Parish Councils will work with us and consider any suitable sites you are aware of that could be used in this way.

In a similar way the 56 day rule can be used to provide extra camping provision which again we know is in high demand. We will also be producing some best practice guidance around this.

#PeakDistrictProud (#PDP)

We await the government's anticipated re-launch of the 'Countryside Code' in spring 2021, and see this underpinning the sustainable visitor 'ask' for the National Park. This is expected to come with a set of national resources, to be confirmed. Locally with all of our stakeholders and partners, #PeakDistrictProud will be how we embed and encourage these behaviours. This will be through communications and supporting the hospitality industry to share good practice with guests and customers.

Community Action

We know partners and resident communities have pitched in to help with litter collections to compliment the work that rangers, gamekeepers and other land managers have been undertaking and that is welcomed. Whilst we welcome and engage with new visitors and collectively work to build understanding of both rights and responsibilities through our #Peak District Proud messages we know that challenges with litter will continue. We would welcome connecting up with litter champions in our village communities.

We have had several communities coming to us and offering to volunteer. We are looking at ways we can support groups and individuals to do this safely. One action we are working on is supporting litter picking as individuals and groups. We are building kits which will include physical resources and guidance including health and safety information. Our own teams are working with district councils to arrange for safe disposal of any litter collected. If your parish would be interested in this scheme and maybe hosting a litter collection kit please get in touch with Rachel.Mora-Bannon@peakdistrict.gov.uk We will be following up with a parish survey to ask questions about what support Parishes need.

Face to face resources

Our Rangers continue to be out and about carrying on with duties as much as possible under government guidance. This includes putting out 'dogs on leads' to protect stock, especially during lambing season, and the protection of ground nesting birds.

As lockdown eases we are working with our ranger and volunteer teams to have as many people as we can in visitor hot spots to engage, educate and encourage positive visitor behaviour. This can only take place within our existing capacity, and must recognise the health and wellbeing impacts on our staff that this work can have.

Planning Liaison Officer

From the 1 April 2021 David Marsden will be taking up the role of Planning Liaison Officer. Dave has previously worked within the Policy and Communities team and takes over from Fiona Todd who has moved full time into the Monitoring and Enforcement team. Dave's email address is david.marsden@peakdistrict.gov.uk

For any queries about this bulletin, please email policy@peakdistrict.gov.uk