

SAVE LONGSTONE EDGE GROUP

18 October 2006

We note ([from the PDNPA's press release](#)) with disappointment that the PDNPA have signally failed to get an EXPLICIT commitment from the minister (Barry Gardiner) that the problem of Old Mineral Permissions in the NATIONAL Parks is a NATIONAL issue.

Given that the 'problem' permission at Longstone Edge was issued in 1952 by a Government Minister, 'over the heads' of the National Park Authority, we find it very aggravating when ministers keep saying that: "it's a local issue and the PDNPA has all the powers it needs to deal with it."

It's surely a supreme irony that, bizarrely, the Peak District would probably be better served on this matter if it weren't in a 'National' Park! It would be governed by Derbyshire County Council, which is (at least) democratically elected (which means that public opinion can change policy) and also has its own fund-raising powers (and a much larger budget) so they could probably deal with this if they so wished.

The issues that we think the minister should be addressing are:
"National Parks - for the conservation and enhancement of the countryside"

1. Quarrying should not be allowed to take place in areas of outstanding natural beauty, such as National Parks, unless it is to meet a proven national need for and the materials being quarried are unavailable elsewhere. Currently, the national need for fluorspar and limestone is unproven and they are most certainly available elsewhere.
2. National Parks should have sufficient powers in law and appropriate funding to be able to revise or revoke old mineral permissions where they conflict with their modern day obligations 'to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area'.
3. Closing the ridiculous loophole in the 1995 Environment Act, whereby a Minerals Planning Authority (in this case the PDNPA) can't revise an old permission without evaluating an 'Environmental Impact Assessment' which must be provided by the quarry operator, but there is no compulsion or sanction on the operator to provide one!
4. The National Parks are funded by DEFRA (on a declining budget) but DEFRA has nothing to do with 'Planning Matters', which are covered by DCLG (formerly ODPM), which isn't interested in providing funds to National Parks because that is DEFRA's domain. This is something of a Catch 22 situation.
5. Bizarrely, the Peak District would probably be better served on this matter if it weren't in a 'National' Park! It would be governed by Derbyshire County Council, which is (at least) democratically elected (which means that public opinion can change policy) and also has its own fund-raising powers (and a much larger budget) so they could probably deal with this if they so wished.
6. The intellectual laziness that allows Limestone to be classified as a 'mineral' in UK planning law - even though it is nowhere defined as such.

7. Why can't the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund be used to solve this problem? After all, this was (supposed to be) the primary justification for collecting the levy.

See link:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/aggregates/delivery.htm#2>

This levy collects over £350m p.a., yet only re-cycles £4.7m back into sustainability and amelioration projects - no tangible impact.

In (yet another) twist of irony, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs have been (apparently) scandalously negligent in not collecting Aggregates Levy on the Limestone Aggregate removed from Backdale - @£1.60 per tonne, and 20,000 tonnes per month, how can they allow this situation of owing over £1.6m to persist. It is quite shocking for them to hide behind the outcome of the planning appeal/inquiry.

"Objective of Levy

To address, by taxation, the environmental costs associated with quarrying operations (noise, dust, visual intrusion, loss of amenity and damage to biodiversity) in line with the Government's statement of intent on environmental taxation. To reduce demand for aggregate and encourage the use of alternative materials where possible."