



# Statement of Significance

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**The South West Peak is a timeless small-scale old-fashioned mosaic. This is the hidden gem of the Peak District, a land of peace and quiet unspoilt by tourism. Here is a crossroads where the uplands join the lowlands at spectacular gritstone rock edges.**

This is a traditional landscape created by generations of farming; slightly derelict and a bit forgotten but with close supportive communities and a fierce spirit. This is character-building land of brutal tranquillity, harsh beauty and wild wet windswept untamed isolation. Winters are bleak and challenging and the living is fragile. This land is complex, threatened, marginal, isolated, undervalued, fragmented, remote and loved.

Here packhorse meets peregrine; curlew and peewit are found amid a patchwork of diverse flowery pastures and meadows; cotton-grass, heather and bilberry clothe the rugged moorland. Traditional stone barns offer memories of idyllic childhood, while hidden industrial heritage is often overlooked.

This is an accessible place for family adventure, for reflection and relaxation. The landscape is enchanting and mythical, alive with ancient legends to stimulate the imagination. People are passionate, inspired by breath-taking views and the freedom of the hills. This is a place of peaceful picnics and exhilarating climbing, an escape to nature and a path to wellbeing.

### Scientific Significance

Peppered with sites of European, national and regional significance for biodiversity and geodiversity, the South West Peak is a mosaic of geological features, priority habitats and priority species.

The South West Peak has 8,553ha or 24% of the area covered by conservation designations, over 9,000ha is priority habitat and there are populations of 158 priority species including brown hare, otter, water vole, curlew, golden plover, lapwing, merlin, short-eared owl, red grouse, southern iron blue mayfly, lesser butterfly orchid and numerous moths and butterflies.

This is one of the most important areas in England for upland breeding waders where curlew, lapwing and snipe persist against the odds. Traditional grassland management favours waxcap fungi with assemblages of international and national importance only recently being identified.

Protected from agricultural improvement by the harshness of the climate, the awkward topography and the poverty of the soils, pockets of species-rich grassland and uncommon plants like adder's tongue fern, moonwort and lesser butterfly orchid hang on.

### Historical Significance

There exists a wide range of heritage assets across the area; archaeological and historical site survey information covers over 6,000ha, some 17% of the area. These assets range from Bronze Age burial mounds to medieval packhorse routes, from post-medieval turnpike roads to gritstone quarries, lead mines and lime kilns. Some settlements originated before the Norman Conquest in 1066 AD, while some farms were established only a few hundred years ago. Whilst a considerable amount is known about the area, not every heritage site has been identified and there is no comprehensive up-to-date record for many of the known features. It is not unusual for a relatively minor feature in a settlement, such as a gritstone trough outside the churchyard gate or a milestone, to have more significance for a community than a nationally designated feature on a remote hilltop. Often, the degree of significance that a community invests in a heritage asset is different from that conferred by a national assessment.

### Cultural Significance

There are long associations with literature and legend here, notably Lud's Church on the Roaches Estate, where Robin Hood, Friar Tuck and Bonny Prince Charlie are all reputed to have hidden from the authorities (Bell, 2005).

In 2007 the poet Simon Armitage published a new translation of the medieval poem Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. The original author is unknown, but the linguistic epicentre of the poem has been located in the area of the Cheshire-Staffordshire-Derbyshire border, which places it squarely in the South West Peak. Some researchers claim to have identified Swythamley Grange as the Castle of Hautdesert, or the jagged peaks of the Roaches as those *"ruze knocked knarrez with knorned stonez"* (The Guardian, 2006).

Lud's Church has been proposed as the site of the Green Chapel (where Sir Gawain met the Green Knight) described in the original text thus: *"Hit hade a hole on the ende and on ayther syde And ouergrowen with gresse in glodes aywhere And al watz holz inwith, nobot an olde caue Or a creuisse of an olde cragge."*

Translated by Armitage to:

*"it had a hole at one end and at either side, and its walls, matted with weeds and moss, enclosed a cavity, like a kind of old cave or crevice in the crag"*

Armitage followed this translation with a BBC documentary in 2009 where he visited the landscapes thought to have inspired the poem's story. His visit to Lud's Church during this documentary led to an increase in visitors to the site, as did the airing of the BBC series Secret Britain in 2011.



The Green Knight? © Karen Shelley-Jones

The South West Peak has provided the backdrop for both television and film in recent years. The Roaches and Doxey Pool provided a moody backdrop for the 2014 feature film Arthur and Merlin. Scenes from the BBC adaptation of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice were filmed in parts of the Peak District including the Roaches, Chapel Street in Longnor and Lyme Park.

The famous 'wet shirt' scene when Colin Firth playing Mr Darcy emerges from the lake was recently immortalised as a larger than life sculpture which toured the country and ended up emerging from the lake at Lyme Park. A little more low-key was the use of the property for an episode of Sky Arts landscape artist of the year, the view of the noble mansion house across the still water of the lake offering a great challenge for amateur and professional artists.

Author Alan Garner OBE has associations with the South West Peak; a Cheshire man born in Congleton, he used to spend his youth walking the hills of the southern Pennines. Garner is best known for his children's fantasy novels and retelling of British folk tales. Among these is the novel 'Thursbitch', inspired by the discovery of an engraved memorial stone in the Goyt Valley, the inscription on one side reads *"Here John Turner was cast away in a heavy snow storm in the night in or about the year 1755"* and on the other side *"The print of a womans shoe was found by his side were [sic] he lay dead"* (David, 2016).

#### Values

There is a great sense of pride, ownership and belonging from the communities in the South West Peak, simple engagement exercises such as asking people to give five words to describe the area almost without fail resulting in positive responses.

Visitors to the area value the scenery, views and tranquillity provided, while the more local knowledge of residents highlights good spots for wildflowers, shrines hidden in drystone walls, quirky pub names and stories of mermaids.

The landscape provides inspiration to many people, resident and visitor alike; storying workshops, creative writing visits and arts projects demonstrate the many layers of meaning which the landscape holds for different people as shown in the following pages.

## Our Moorlands

*Come with us on a journey over the Moorlands.*

*Our Moorlands are exciting and spooky*

*Our Moorlands are thrilling and full of secrets and special places.*

*Start at Tittesworth for car parks and a shop and picnics.*

*If the reservoir was an animal, it would be a beaver, busily darting about, making rippling patterns where ducks swim and fish splash.*

*Out and up the road and into the hills,*

*If the Roaches were an animal, they would be a fox fiercely scavenging for food*

*Or they would be a rabbit with the grass swaying in the wind like tall ears with cotton grass as soft and as white as that rabbit's tail*

*And Doxey's Pool would be quiet, sleeping calmly.*

*Or if Doxey's Pool was an animal,*

*It would be a fish with scales as shiny as a mirror, chewing on bones*

*And a splash and a swirl could be the mermaid waiting.*

*Don't go in.*

*And if Thorncliffe was an animal, it would be a wolf, stalking and*

*hunting while the owls screech and the wind howls.*

*And that howling wind is all you hear on the hilltop where the Mermaid Pool at Morridge is bottomless and gloomy, an ugly, black crow of a pool, waiting for the wind to push you in.*

*Down into Meerbrook where even the garden sheds are sinister, small and dark where birds like bats fly out when you open the door. But after the birds, the shed is quiet as a mouse.*

*But Blackshaw Moor, Blackshaw Moor is a badger's den: secret, safe and a place to sleep.*

**Blackshaw Moor Primary School, February 2016**

## This Land Reveals Itself

*This land reveals itself, the hills floating, islands above the morning mist. From Foxlow Edge, by Windgather Rocks, over the Dale of Goyt, by Gradbach Hill and the Roaches and the swelling ridge of Morridge, the endless wind brushes the moorlands clean. Or over Cats Tor and Shining Tor and Pym's Chair.*

*This land unfolds, revealing itself in the broad sweep of the moors and the cotton grass flying in tiny pennants, brave as Gawain questing along the hills. The light grows, catching the still pools of cold, dark water that mirror the sky, the sodden mosses of the moors, the returning sphagnum, and the streams they feed, streams running down into the valleys they have cut over ten thousand years.*

*This land welcomes you in, revealing itself in the lives of people, in the paths worn over hills by centuries of tread, in the hilltop tombs and cave-homes of ancestors. Those paths thread the hills linking hilltop grazing to narrow lanes, leading down, past the changing stones of drystone walls, over the tight curves of the packhorse bridges to the villages tucked into the folds of the dales. The old Jagger paths will take you back up onto the hilltops again and lonely pubs resting on exposed ridges and villages where Robin Hood took refuge and buttons and coins were cast, where hermits lived in carved caves under boulders and halls were built onto cliff faces. This is a tough land that has grown tough communities surviving invasion, plague and enclosure, holding together, tying farm with quarry with merchant and trader and butcher, building a legacy that holds on in latest tides of change and upheaval.*

*Farms are embedded here, growing old with the tracks and the walls, adapting, finding the way to endure through the long shifting centuries. Absorbing new patterns these communities have survived. As Charles Cotton's 17th Century description of "the Wonders of the Peaks" and 19th Century claims about the "Alps of England" brought the first tourists into the Peaks, they found strong communities and thriving landscapes here in the Moorlands. More recently, the National Park has held that world together, working to find the balance between farm, community, landscape and visitor, helping the individuals to protect the whole.*

*There are people here, there have been people here for a long time but this land still holds its secrets and holds them close. The deer that slip unnoticed along the edge of the field; unguessed, the little owl that watches from the branch of a tree, the orchid that opens in a damp meadow, the warmth of a form where a hare has just rested.*

*But this land holds sinister stories, too, and reveals itself in a darker vein with old tales of murder, robbery and cannibalism. That moment still waits, for the breathing night when the mermaids stir in their deep pools and ghost dogs walk haunted trails while Hob Hurst rattles bones in his house and counts the living and the dead. King Arthur's Gawain can lead us through this storied land, taking us to refuges and perils and the empty stillness of the Dale of Goyt and the abandoned hamlet of Thursbitch under a bright moon. He will lead us, too, to beauty and wonder and the green deeps of Lud's Church.*

*And from the last old flower meadows of the dales, along the worn flags of a Jagger's path, past time-worn barns and new homes to the eroded edges of the Roaches, a single echoing call, captures life and hope and emptiness in a rippling voice that heralds spring in its coming and warns of winter in its going. This land is the land of the curlew.*

By participants at the "Deep Dales and Wild Places" workshop,  
February 2016, with Gordon MacLellan from Creeping Toad

## I know

*I know many of you think I am unfeeling, unaware of my very being. You're wrong. I remember the pain and agony when deep within things stirred and bubbled and burst through my skin. I felt the torture of sharp, jagged prongs thrust upwards, exposed, normally hidden safe below but in my case, in my case relics of hard uneven teeth that still gnash at the sky. The evidence of such violent force is there for all to see. Many of you stop and stare, reach out to touch and feel. Only fools will take me for granted. I don't flinch, or react - not yet, like my brothers and sisters in far-off lands. But I've done it once. I may decide to again.*

*I remember that first sniff of coldish Nordic air. It didn't take long for the hoarfrost and then the snow to slowly slide down across my skin. There were thick sheets of ice evicting all in their way. Pushing like a woman in labour, glaciers shoved without mercy loose boulders and deep-rooted trees, to new locations many miles away on the lower plains.*

*Unable to breathe, left frozen for years, I lay dormant but not dead. When the spring finally came I sprouted new growth. Vegetation that's hardy, that's sturdy, so I'll never be bare again. I may not be crass or vulgar, with vibrant violent colours, but I settled for – no, I chose subtle hints and hues that please the discerning eye. Don't get me wrong. My features are not mono-chrome or suffering dull conformity, for I have small buds of delicate flowers that blossom and unfold, whilst scattered at will amongst the greenery. That's the natural way, the Pennine Way.*

*Who is left? The old, the foolhardy, the holiday maker? Faceless accountants who don't know my ways but stamp their will on my skyline with decisions made in distant cities. You spread cancerous strips of shadowy grey tarmac, flattening straighter and straighter roads to allow mankind's death wish to come to pass. You travel at unnatural speeds, in metal chariots, you race, you joust with each other, you kill, you maim, you airlift your victims for medical assistance. You also plough down, you also murder other free-roaming living beings, but they are left as trophies on the side and you pass by and euphemistically call it, call them, road-kill.*

*I over-bear you talk of how I should be preserved and conserved and looked after. Regeneration, revitalisation. After all, you say, I'm a thing of beauty. The acres of paperwork filled in, crossed out, reworded, re-typed and edited, then sent under stamp or keyboard click. The myriad of quangos, governments, councils, charities and commissions both European and countryside, proclaiming the best of intentions. To keep me 'natural.' But beware if you wander off the track. Your legacy may bring you outcomes that maim you too.*

*I'm used to hiding things, whether it's petrified but steadfast congregations of the faithful or mythical green dragons. Within my folds grand operas are sung, poets read. I know of artists who paint and ramblers who exercise their limbs. I boast of high towns and villages, of pure water that's pumped, bottled, paid for, consumed. You wonder if I still host mammals from other continents: antipodean wallabies, black panthers and the like. I'll keep you all guessing. I am a worthy keeper of secrets, for despite the weathering of bitter winds, rain, sleet and snow; regardless of scorching unshaded summer heat, I am also a place of safety. Or so I'd like you to think. You call me the South West Peak District, but my name is my business. My memory is long and unforgiving and despite your best efforts, I will not be beaten.*

By David from Borderland Voices, 2015



Knitted Landscape by Mary King

## Heritage Priorities

Statements of environmental opportunity for the landscape are detailed in the National Character Area profile for the South West Peak (Natural England, 2013); of these, a number of the proposed actions for protection and conservation

have other mechanisms for delivery or are outside the scope of this work. For the South West Peak Landscape Partnership, therefore, the heritage priorities for the area are summarised in table 3.

**Table 3. Heritage priorities for the South West Peak**

### High Priority Heritage Element

*(those elements which are crucial to the landscape and cannot be lost or compromised)*

### Response of the Landscape Partnership

The moorlands and internationally important habitats and species that they support.

The majority of the moorlands are currently designated under European or national conservation designations, with the statutory agencies engaged in their management. Not an area where the LP needs to focus.

The mosaic of diverse habitats – grasslands, woodlands, hedgerows and scrub which provide important natural heritage and characterise the landscape.

The richness of habitats and the patchwork effect forming the landscape and views valued by people are vital parts of the heritage of this area. Some habitats are part of designated sites. The LP will focus on valuing and enhancing this mosaic.

The rivers and streams and the reservoirs they supply.

The significance of the landscape for water supply and control should not be underestimated; the Water Framework Directive influences targeting of resources, but by working with natural processes and in partnership the LP can achieve a wider benefit which will be better integrated.

The scheduled monuments and listed structures which mark the cultural heritage of the place.

Scheduling and listing provides suitable protection for these features. Not an area where the LP needs to focus.

The land management tradition, knowledge and skill passed on through generations.

The experience and knowledge, in particular of the older generation is vital to conserve the valued features of the landscape. The LP can make a difference here.

The dispersed but resilient resident and farming communities.

The people who live and work in this landscape are vital to its persistence. The LP feels that it can support these communities.

Heritage management skills such as hay making, drystone walling, species identification.

Important to maintain the fabric of the landscape, build skills and confidence within communities. The LP can make a difference here.

### Medium Priority Heritage Element

*(those elements which are important to the landscape, may be vulnerable and should be protected)*

### Response of the Landscape Partnership

Breeding upland waders – curlew, lapwing, snipe.

All three species are of conservation concern, curlew is globally threatened and snipe is a designated feature of the Leek Moors SSSI. These species are important to local people. The LP will work to support populations of these species.

Waxcap fungi grasslands.

A number of locations have been identified as having international or national significance; however, these are generally not protected. The LP can make a difference here.

White-clawed crayfish.

A globally endangered species and keystone species in rivers and streams. Virtually lost in the area. The LP can make a difference here.

Traditional field barns.

Undoubtedly a significant feature in the landscape, but often in poor condition, part of the story of land management over the generations and with high profile of late. The LP can make a difference here.

Archaeological sites and historic and cultural features including historical tracks, mile posts, boundary markers, lime kilns and roadside drinking troughs.

Often the unscheduled and unlisted features are of more significance to people, yet frequently neglected and overlooked. The LP can make a difference here.

### Lower Priority Heritage Element

*(those elements which contribute to the landscape but could be replaced or substituted)*

### Response of the Landscape Partnership

Existing interpretation of heritage elements.

Telling the story of heritage is important in ensuring its survival. There is some existing interpretation but it is generally weak. The LP can make a difference here.

The network of rights of way and open access to heritage and landscape features.

Much of this is out of the control of the LP; however, access for a wide range of people to heritage features is important. The LP can make a difference here.

The stories, folklore and legends about places and people.

Stories and folklore are important to people here; however, stories change and evolve over generations, therefore not a strong focus for the LP.

Other species such as mammals, birds, butterflies and wildflowers not mentioned above.

While species diversity is important here, the LP accepts that there are likely to be some changes in community composition in the face of climate change projections. Higher priority keystone and flagship species will be the focus of the LP while working to ensure resilience of habitats to support these species.

### Ecosystem Services Priorities

The Landscape Opportunity Mapping project (Rouquette & Holt, 2016) was commissioned in 2015 by the Landscape Partnership to deliver an assessment of current and potential habitat opportunity and ecosystem services provision. The aim of the project was to undertake habitat opportunity mapping of key habitats and to map the supply (capacity) and demand (beneficiaries) of ecosystem services. This was done using EcoServ - a GIS toolkit, and bespoke modelling. Alongside this, modelling of integrated flood risk management was undertaken to understand the strategic opportunities for working with natural processes across the South West Peak in reducing surface water flooding resulting from sudden short duration storm events.

Habitat opportunity mapping identified (i) opportunities to expand habitat for biodiversity in areas that are ecologically connected to existing habitat networks and (ii) to promote habitat features that can attenuate surface water runoff and so reduce downstream flood risk. The mapping for biodiversity enhancement produced maps of landscape permeability, habitat networks, constraints to habitat creation and habitat opportunity for five broad habitats (heathland, mire, semi-natural grassland, wet grassland and woodland). The mapping for surface water attenuation focused on floodplain woodland opportunity and riparian attenuation features. The opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and runoff attenuation were then combined to highlight areas that could deliver multiple benefits.

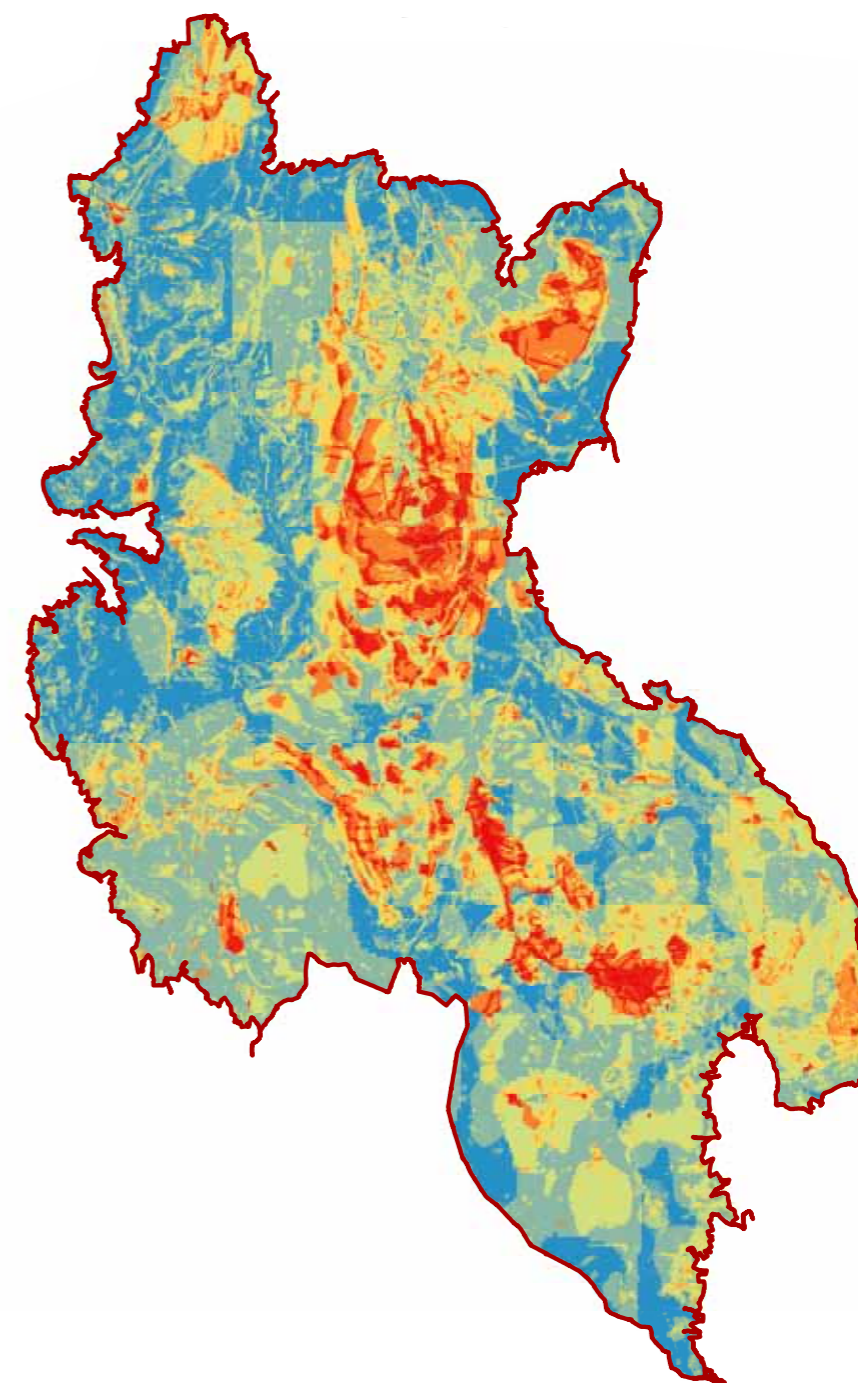
Seven ecosystem services were mapped (carbon storage, water flow, water quality, agricultural production, tranquillity, accessible nature and green travel) using 'EcoServ' and bespoke models. These were thought to be services that were highly relevant to the natural capital assets of the area. The supply of all services was mapped and the demand was only mapped where relevant, for water quality and flow, accessible nature and green travel. Each of the ecosystem services were mapped on a scale from 0 (low provision) to 100 (high provision). Once each service was mapped individually, maps were generated of the supply of multiple ecosystem services as average scores and hotspots based on area. Data on the average ecosystem services provision for each Landscape Character Type was also calculated.

The maps produced allow the examination of the trade-offs and synergies in the provision of multiple ecosystem services at fine detail. The habitat opportunity mapping can also be used to show the optimal locations for creating habitat for biodiversity conservation and flood risk management. The core swathe of the area, the open moorland and to a slightly lesser extent the moorland hills and ridges and the enclosed gritstone uplands, is a hotspot for ecosystem service delivery. The peat bogs particularly are delivering high levels of carbon storage, water quality, and quantity (slowing the flow), while allowing public access to the natural and tranquil surroundings. Coldspots of delivery tend to be in urban areas in the buffer zone, but are important areas of demand for such services.

Key synergies, where management can deliver multiple benefits, are between carbon storage, water quantity and quality, accessible nature and biodiversity enhancement. Important trade-offs can be seen between food production and water quality, water quantity, carbon storage and accessible nature, although intensifying agricultural production could increase the production of services. Another is the conflict that exists between public access, tranquillity and biodiversity. Woodland opportunity areas for biodiversity can be combined with ones for floodplain woodland runoff attenuation, which shows that both can be achieved.

This work will be used to highlight strategic locations for delivering multiple benefits, by continuing with practices in hotspot areas, and evaluating how enhancement can be achieved in coldspots. It can be used to identify general rules and objectives for managing broad areas of the South West Peak and to highlight specific fields where land use change may enhance a number of services or connect habitat. Using this work to inform the LP projects will require ground-truthing and the co-operation of landowners.

### Ecosystem Service Hotspots



#### Legend

- SWP study area
- Value**
- High : 7
- Low : 0

This map shows the hotspots of ecosystem service (ES) capacity in the core SWP study area. The value shown relates to the number of different ES for which that grid square is a hotspot (out of a maximum possible of 8). A hotspot is defined as the top 20% area for carbon storage, water flow, water quality, food production, tranquillity, and accessible nature capacities, or the presence of abkey location for archaeology and history, and habitat for biodiversity.

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0 4.5 Km  
Date: 25/02/2016

1:150,000  
(at A4 paper size)

