

German study tour May 2022 Feedback

Form

In May 2022 three members of Lake District National Park Authority staff went on study tour to Germany to visit the Harz national park and Luneberg heath. We selected two different areas; an upland national park and a lowland heathland protected landscape. Both well established protected areas with high numbers of visitors.

Our objectives set prior to the trip were;

- to visit protected sites in German and gain a perspective on their management.
- gain an understanding of National Parks and protected areas in Germany, their legislation, governance structure and management.
- the similarities and differences and what we can learn in LDNPA from the German approach.
- to build our professional network of contacts. Utilising these contacts to drive forward best practice in national park management.
- see agricultural management in practice in areas with large predators- lynx and wolf.
- to understand how their culture and national parks are conserved and promoted. And what challenges they face.
- with new land management initiatives about to start in the UK, we wanted to see how German sites managed and any shared similarities.
- to understand how German National Parks are promoted and what the Germans public's perception of their National Parks are.
- see how Ranger Services have adapted to the pandemic and are responding to new audiences and demands
- meet likeminded colleagues from around Europe and maintain CPD.
- to share lessons learnt in LDNPA and the wider UK national parks.

Our tour and feedback on each day

Date	Location(s)	Activity
4 May	Manchester to Harz Mountains	<p>Travel from the UK to Germany. We flew from Manchester to Berlin and then four trains to Bad Harzberg- our base in the Harz.</p> <p>Feedback- Due to a flight being cancelled at short notice we needed to rebook a more expensive flight. This resulted in having to book a cheaper holiday house out of the centre- some 40 minutes walk. Ideally a hotel/house in the centre would have been a better location and made logistics easier. Four trains and connections is a lot to get in one day and flying to an airport nearer the Harz would have been better.</p>
5 May	<p>Harz National Park-The Brocken.</p> 	<p>A visit to the iconic Brocken, a mountain summit with a visitor centre, train and hiking/cycling routes. Followed by a walk back towards Bad Herzberg (where we were based).</p> <p>Feedback- This was a very well organised visit and allowed us to see the impressive interpretation at the Brocken visitor centre and meet National Park staff. The walk down, guided by a Ranger, gave a great chance to discuss topics and learn about the area. Significant spruce dieback was apparent throughout our visit and was a major conversation topic.</p>

<p>6 May</p>	<p>Achtermann/ Oderbrück area- Harz</p> 	<p>A guided hike in the Achtermann/ Oderbrück area. With a visit to a ranger station and Torfhaus Information Center.</p> <p>Feedback- Out with a different Ranger in another part of the park. This gave a different perspective and any again was very well organised and informative. Lots to see and hear about regarding access, education work, wolves and how spruce dieback was being tackled.</p>
<p>7 May</p>	<p>Bad Harzberg</p> 	<p>Talk about the Harz Lynx Project, visit to Bad Harzberg visitor centre and afterwards a cable car trip up to the Burgberg summit and from there hike to the lynx enclosure. Then a hike back to Bad Harzberg</p> <p>Feedback- One of the most useful days of the visit. Very well prepared and a comprehensive overview of how they reintroduced lynx and their management. We had a chance to see lynx in an enclosure and understand how they disperse. Fascinating!</p>

<p>8 May</p>	<p>Bad Herzberg to Luneberg Heath</p> 	<p>Two trains to Luneberg. Then picked up by our host and orientation tour around the area. Followed by dinner with our host.</p> <p>Feedback- Staying in the centre of the heath was the perfect base and meant that days could start promptly. The evening tour gave a good initial impression of the area and outlined what we were going to see. Luneberg heath is an amazing and special area with varied things to see from the built, natural, cultural, historic and agricultural heritage.</p>
<p>9 May</p>	<p>Luneberg Heath- and Luneberg University</p>	<p>Luneberg Heath- visit to heritage farm, environmental education centre and various sites and then evening visit to Luneberg University.</p> <p>Feedback- a busy and packed day. Very informative. The heritage farm contained a number of historic farming buildings that had been relocated into one area of the Nature Park. They were part of the traditional vernacular architecture of the area and what have been how local communities lived until the 1950s. We then visited several areas of the heath to look at current management. Late afternoon we travelled to the University located in the nearest town- Luneburg. Here we</p>

		<p>meet with academics monitoring the heath. This was a highlight and gave lots of insight into the challenges facing the area. It also provided an opportunity to see the town which is a very beautiful and unspoilt.</p>
<p>10 May</p>	<p>Luneberg Heath</p> 	<p>Presentation to Luneberg Heath staff, visit to HQ, agricultural site visits, meeting a shepherd, wolf management and visit to adult ed centre and to a wetland.</p> <p>Feedback- not all the Luneberg heath staff who attended the presentation spoke English. This was an issue as it was not delivered in German and we were not alerted beforehand that the audience was not fluent in English. They also cut our presentation short and we did not cover one of the topics they turned out to be interested in. In hindsight a clearer brief and timings from our host would have been helpful. As one member of the group could speak some German if we had known in advance we could have delivered some in German.</p>

		<p>Talking to other members of staff who worked at Luneberg Heath was very useful. We met the sites stalker and he ran through the issues with wolves and other predators which was very interesting.</p> <p>The grazing management of the area and use of traditional shepherds was an excellent example of something that we have struggled to recruit in the UK. The combination of a tied house on site, a permemant salary and cover to allow leave to be taken meant that they had a sustainable model in place,</p>
11 May	Travel back to UK	A simpler and quicker journey involving just two trains.

How well did we meet our original tour objectives?

Learning objective	How successful did the trip met the objective?
To visit protected sites in German and gain a perspective on their management	Met- we visited an upland mountain National Park and a lowland heath protected area- a Nature Park. This gave an excellent contrast between sites and also the difference between a National Park and a Nature Area.
Gain an understanding of National Parks and protected areas in Germany, their legislation, governance structure and management	Met- both areas went through their management structure and governance.
The similarities and differences and what we can learn in LDNPA from the German approach	Met- We were able to share how we managed our national parks and have built new contacts.
To build our professional network of contacts. Utilising these contacts to drive forward best practice in national park management	Met- we exchanged contact details and I hope that both bodies will return and visit LDNPA in the future.

See agricultural management in practice in areas with large predators- lynx and wolf	Met- Luneberg has the highest density of wolves in Europe. It has a traditional grazing management and has had to adapt to having wolves present in large numbers.
To understand how their culture and national parks are conserved and promoted. And what challenges they face	Met- we have a much better understanding of the challenges both sites face.
With new land management initiatives about to start in the UK, we wanted to see how German sites managed and any shared similarities	Met- we were able to share similarities and as importantly see the differences in practices and approach.
To understand how German National Parks are promoted and what the Germans public's perception of their National Parks is	Met- we visited museums, visitor centres, ranger stations and education centres. In addition we were able to meet and talk to local people about their national park and protected areas.
See how Ranger Services have adapted to the pandemic and are responding to new audiences and demands	Met- We were able to discuss and learn from the German approach to the pandemic.
Meet likeminded colleagues from around Europe and maintain CPD	Met- we have met a wide range of inspirational colleagues. It has increased our CPD
To share lessons learnt in LDNPA and the wider UK national parks	Met- presentations planned and one delivered so far.

Other lessons from the trip;

- Take Euros in Germany not everywhere takes cards.
- Expect to be out for a full day and be prepared for all weathers- we did some long walks.
- Try and stay close to the centre if you are in a town.
- Leave gaps between train connections and be prepared that two trains can be leaving the same platform, at the same time to different destinations!
- Having a pickup and drop off at your accommodation is ideal
- Fully explore itinerary with both hosts

- Book in some free time and a daily debrief.
- Check the audience speaks English at any presentation and ensure a clear brief.
- Going to two sites was excellent
- Think about including a self guided day