Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 7c**

30 June 2026

Member Champion for Planning and Sustainable Development

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to merge the roles of Member Champion for Development Management and Sustainable Development.

Recommendation

2. That Members:
    a. merge the roles of Member Champion for Development Management and Sustainable Development; and,
    b. approve Mr Murday continuing in the merged role until September 2027.

Strategic Framework

3. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and support the strategic planning framework:
    - Corporate Plan Objective 30:
      "Plan and manage the Authority's work to make the most effective use of its resources…".

Background

4. The key role of each Member Champion is to support the achievement of the Authority's policies and objectives for that area of work. Currently, there are separate Member Champions for Development Management (Mr Murday) and for Sustainable Development (Mr Foster), although both deal with elements of planning.

5. The Sustainable Development role covers planning policy, and a key element of that is contributing to the preparation of the Local Plan. That work has now come to an end. The focus will now be on *implementation* of the Local Plan policies, with particular emphasis on promoting the development of allocated housing sites, affordable housing exception sites, and on sustainable development generally. That work is largely carried out by the Development Management Section in dealing with planning applications, and so there is a degree of overlap/duplication in the responsibilities of the two Member Champions, which has been inherent since the roles were first created.

6. Following discussion with the outgoing Member Champion for Sustainable Development (Mr Foster), officers' view is that it would be both timely – and more effective – to merge the two roles into a single Member Champion for Planning and Sustainable Development. This new role will be better able to represent and promote this work, including supporting and assisting officers, by bringing together planning policy, implementation of that policy, and the Authority's funding for sustainable development in the National Park into a single role. An updated job description for the role is at **Appendix A**.

7. As Mr Foster has already stepped down as Member Champion for Sustainable Development, it is proposed that Mr Murday continue in the combined role, as part of his existing appointment through to September Authority meeting 2027.

Financial Implications

8. None.

Legal Implications

9. None.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

10. None.

Conclusion

11. The adoption of the new Local Plan will change significantly the focus and workload of the Member Champion for Sustainable Development role. It is, therefore, recommended that Members take this opportunity to merge it with the Member Champion for Development Management – to create a single 'Champion' for both policy and implementation.

Richard Graham
Acting Director of Conservation and Community

Background Papers:

Appendix A

Member Champion for Planning and Sustainable Development

Job Description

General

The key role of each Member Champion is to support the achievement of the Authority's policies and objectives for that area of work. The exact way in which any Member Champion does this will depend on the individual Member and the particular area of work. Nonetheless, there are some general roles that form part of the job description for each Member Champion:

a. represent and promote the area of work externally, including acting as a 'public face' of the Authority through the media;
b. support officers in the implementation of the Authority's policies, and the achievement of the Authority's objectives for that area of work;
c. assist officers in the formulation of new policy proposals before formal consideration by the Authority. They are expected to bring the wider `Members' perspective' to these discussions – and to seek early input from other Members when significant policy changes are being considered.
d. champion the area of work within the Authority, including introducing relevant reports that come to the Authority and its committees, or speaking first in the debate.
e. act as a 'critical friend' to officers and encourage improvement, for example where the Authority may not be meeting its objectives or targets for the area of work.
f. participate in relevant 'performance reviews' instigated by the Audit and Review Committee;
g. report back to Members, including producing and presenting a written report each year to inform other Members of their involvement in the range of issues and activities within their area of responsibility.

Authority programmes covered

- Development Management (including enforcement and minerals)
- Development Planning (planning policy and monitoring)
- Sustainable Development Fund (grants to support local projects that bring economic, social and environmental benefits to the National Park)

Representative roles

1. To represent the Authority in the media in relation to significant planning decisions, Local Plan policy, and Sustainable Development Fund projects.

2. To represent the Authority on the above issues at Parish Council/Parish Forum and other public meetings (where necessary).

3. To represent the Authority on housing advisory groups (NYC and W&F), and regional and cross-boundary strategic planning issues as required.

4. Representing the Authority at certain Sustainable Development Funding events.

Note: The Member Champion does not include any special role in relation to individual planning applications (other than the normal 'representational role' that all Members have). In other words, the Member Champion should not be directly involved in working with officers to negotiate with applicants to resolve issues on a particular application before it reaches Committee.

Current Issues

1. Implementing new Local Plan policies, including:
    i. working proactively with developers and housing providers to permit development of the allocated sites and secure sufficient rural exception sites to achieve the Park's annual housing supply target of 75 units and provide affordable housing that meets local needs;
    ii. ensuring new development is sustainable, and supports the objectives in the National Park Management Plan, through permitting improved energy efficiency and appropriate renewable energy schemes; improvements in community services such as broadband and mobile phone coverage, biodiversity enhancements, sustainable tourism and active travel.

2. Recruitment and retention of planning officers.

3. Delivering an effective planning enforcement service that focusses resources on cases with the greatest potential for harm. Ensuring compliance with landscape planting and biodiversity enhancement requirements through effective monitoring.

4. Working with local authorities and others to try to secure investment to support the socio-economic objectives in the National Park Management Plan.

Induction programme and ongoing commitments

- Briefing from Heads of Development Management and Sustainable Development
- Conservation and Community Directorate Management Team (every 2 months);
- Media training
- Job shadowing a Senior Planning Officer,

Lead Officer: Richard Graham, Head of Development Management.