Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 10**

30 June 2026

Media Procedure & Protocol

Purpose of the Report

1. To present Members with an updated Media Procedure and Protocol and seek any additional comments from Members on the proposed approach.

Recommendation

2. That Members approve the updated Media Procedure and Protocol

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 29: Provide high quality, efficient and effective services and communications to the public and other stakeholders.

Background

4. The Media Procedure and Protocol is a corporate policy that requires approval by Members every five years. It was last reviewed in August 2021.

5. The document remains substantively unchanged but has undergone a light refresh to ensure alignment with current operations and our anticipated approach to managing proactive and reactive communications through the media.

Financial Implications

6. There are no financial implications relating to this policy.

Legal Implications

7. This Media Procedure and Protocol provides a framework to ensure all external communications are approved, lawful and compliant with applicable legislation, regulatory requirements and the organisation's statutory reporting duties.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

8. In line with our equality, diversity and inclusion policy, we are committed to ensuring that media communications, including press releases and statements, are accessible, inclusive and respectful. This includes providing information in accessible formats where required, using clear and inclusive language, and considering the needs of diverse audiences, including those with protected characteristics.

Mark Sadler
Communications Manager

Document Status	
Date adopted	30 June 2026
Adopted by	Authority
Lead Officer	Communications Manager
Date of next review	June 2031

Media Procedure and Protocol

1. Principles of media relations

We work with the media to manage the Authority's reputation as a professional, respected organisation. Using the media to reach a wide audience also helps us to achieve our second statutory purpose, "to promote … understanding".

Effective media management is a vital part of the Authority's communication procedures and is particularly important when dealing with sensitive, controversial or political matters.

The shift to 24/7 news and digital platforms means stories break and evolve in minutes, not hours or days. Continuous updates, social media virality, and audience expectations for instant information dominate modern journalism. In short, media protocols must balance *speed*, *accuracy*, and *public trust* - a far more challenging task than in previous decades.

This procedure relies on the Authority dealing professionally and efficiently with journalists' requests. The Authority must provide journalists with the information they require within deadline to maintain and enhance its reputation. To this end, all media requests and liaison work are managed by the Communications Team (Communications).

Anyone speaking on behalf of the Authority is the representative of the whole organisation during that interview and should give the official Authority response and decision as briefed. If in doubt, individuals should liaise with the Communications, the Chair and/or relevant member of the Senior Management Team as required.

Members who are speaking as representatives, or on behalf of another body, for example, county, district or parish councils, should make this clear before commenting to the press.

2. The Local Government Act 1986 and the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity

The Local Government Act 1986 prohibits the Authority from publishing "any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party". The Authority must also have regard to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity in coming to any decision on publicity.

"Publicity" is defined by the 1986 Act as being "any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public."

In determining whether any published material contravenes the prohibition in the 1986 Act, regard shall be had to a number of matters including “the time and other circumstances of publication". It is possible, therefore, that material published by the National Park Authority could fall foul of the prohibition and be unlawful - especially on account of its timing, i.e. in the run up to an election.

During periods of heightened sensitivity, e.g. the pre-election period (between the notice of an election and the election itself), guidance approved by the Monitoring Officer will be circulated internally by the Communications Manager. Authority business should continue during an election period. Publicity around normal National Park Authority business/events should also continue, but it must be thoroughly considered to ensure the Authority’s communication channels are not used by anyone for private or party political purposes.

Members who hold positions of special responsibility within the Authority, e.g. the Chair and Member Champions, and who would normally be expected to comment on the Authority’s behalf and with the use of Authority resources will be permitted to do so. However, such occasions should sensibly be kept to a minimum during the pre-election period.

3. Responding to media enquiries – reactive media liaison

All media calls should be directed through Communications in the first instance.

Call: 01969 652374 or email: comms@yorkshiredales.org.uk

If a member of the media calls you direct, you should pass the enquiry on to Communications. The team will **not** pass any journalists through to any Member or officer without liaising with them first.

On receiving a media enquiry, a member of the Communications team will contact the relevant officer, Section Head or Director to discuss the Authority’s response. They will provide details of the journalist, who they work for, their deadline and the context and background to the enquiry. They will also advise on the most appropriate approach to take.

“No comment” is not considered an acceptable response. In some instances, a holding statement will be required until a considered response can be agreed.

4. Reaction statements

There will be occasions where the Authority needs to prepare a reaction statement in response to likely enquiries about a particular issue.

Communications will consider the need for such statements and prepare them as appropriate. If an officer or Member becomes aware of a situation which they feel is likely to generate media interest (especially if it’s a sensitive or controversial one), they should contact the Communications Manager as soon as possible so a statement can be prepared. Such statements will not usually be issued as news releases but will be used as required in response to media enquiries.

Approval processes for reaction statements is the same as those applied to news releases.

5. News releases – proactive

All Authority news releases will be written by a member of the Communications team.

In most cases, news releases will include a quote from an Authority spokesperson. This spokesperson will normally be the appropriate Member Champion, the Chair/Deputy Chair or a senior officer of the Authority. The Member or officer may also need to be available and prepared for interview on it. Where an issue or piece of news is deemed to be particularly sensitive or controversial, it is likely that the spokesperson will be the Chair or Chief Executive.

All news releases will be checked with the person(s) quoted before distribution to the media. News releases will also be cleared with the relevant Director prior to publication.

All Authority news releases will be circulated to the media by email. Communications maintains a comprehensive media contact list which includes the local, regional, national and specialist press. This should be regularly reviewed and updated.

News releases will also be published on the Authority website and social media as soon as possible. News releases are also posted on the SharePoint Hub.

6. Joint press releases

When producing a joint press release, the other partner's/partners' logo can be used if appropriate.

Releases should be coordinated with partner organisations. Authority comment may be included in other organisations' media releases and quotes from external individuals may be included in Authority media releases. On some occasions, the Authority will send out a release on behalf of a partner organisation or partnership, for example, news releases sent on behalf of the National Park Management Plan partnership, Biodiversity Forum, YDMT etc.

7. TV and radio interviews

If you are approached by any member of the media (Press, Online, TV or Radio) for comment, insight or interview, as with all other media enquiries, they should be directed to a member of the Communications team or Communications Manager, who will take the enquiry forward. Please follow this process even if you are the right officer or Member to comment.

8. Process for dealing with filming enquiries

The Authority is regularly approached by TV, film or advertising production companies or individuals who want to film within the National Park. All such enquiries should be directed through to the Communications team:

Call: 01969 652374 or email: comms@yorkshiredales.org.uk

Filming enquiries can also be put through to the Communications Manager:

Call: 01969 652394 or email: mark.sadler@yorkshiredales.org.uk
Communications will establish what is to be filmed, for what purposes, and where the filming will take place.

We will explain that the National Park Authority owns less than 0.05% of the land in the National Park and that most of the land is in private ownership. Permission to film must therefore be sought from landowners rather than from the National Park Authority. Landowner contact details must not be given out without their direct consent to do so.

Communications hold a list of the most frequently sought after filming locations and can often quickly facilitate an introduction. If there's any doubt, Communications will forward the location details to the relevant Area Ranger and Area Manager who will identify the landowner and ask permission for the Authority to pass the landowner contact details on to the production company. If this is granted, the Area Ranger/Area Manager will inform Communications who will, in turn, inform the production company.

If the person does not know exactly where they want to film or are looking for location suggestions, Communications may make their own suggestions or liaise with relevant officers to make location suggestions. The above process to establish landowner permission to contact is then followed.

NB There is a list of landowners of regularly requested locations on the SharePoint Hub. This includes landowners who are happy for their details to be given to film production companies without further contact from the Authority.

If the request is to film on land owned by the National Park Authority, the Head of Park Management will confirm the location fee to the film production company and ask them for:

- A risk assessment
- Signed licence agreement
- Proof of public liability insurance up to £5 million

Communications will inform staff at the local National Park Centre, the Area Manager and the Area Ranger.

Filming is allowed without permission on public land, including public roads.

All filming enquiries that may attract a fee/donation for Authority staff time and/or resources or a location fee for filming on Authority land must be passed on to the Head of Park Management to deal with.

If it is judged by Communications that the filming should not be subject to a fee, for example, because it is entirely consistent with the Authority's values and it will communicate messages that support our purposes, then Communications will continue to coordinate a response, whilst copying in the Head of Park Management for information.

On major productions, particularly those that may impact significantly on officer time, Communications will inform the Senior Management Team through the Media Briefing or consult them for a decision if this is felt necessary.

It will also be worth reading the instructions we have for film makers on our website.

9. Film-makers wanting to use drones.

It is essential for filmmakers to obtain the landowner's permission for take-off and landing zones when operating a drone or drones anywhere in the UK. The same process as above may be used to help put filmmakers using drones in touch with landowners.

The use of drones in the UK is heavily regulated by the Civil Aviation Authority, and more information can be found on their website.

10. Crisis management

A Communication Plan, outlining the appropriate actions to be taken in the event of a major disruption to its premises, staff and/or services, is included in the Authority's Business Continuity Plan.

Subsidiary to this, the Authority also has a 10-step Crisis Communication Plan that should be referred to in the event of an emergency, major incident or crisis.

11. Monitoring the media and press clippings

Communications circulate a daily media update to SMT, Section Heads and other relevant officers. This comprises a summary of news coverage the Authority has received in the last 24 hours and any other relevant news stories. To do this, the Authority owns an NLA Business Licence that allows for the occasional copying of both printed and online versions of news titles. It allows us to make or receive web, digital (e.g. scan, email, PDF) and paper copies from all the titles NLA represents. Copying published articles from any other newspapers or any magazines or books in any way will mean the Authority is infringing copyright law and liable to prosecution. The distribution of web links to online versions of any articles is acceptable.

Those who wish to stay abreast of the National Park and the National Park Authority's appearance in the media are advised to create their own Google Alert account and use keywords: Yorkshire Dales National Park; Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority; Yorkshire Dales.

12. Media support and advice

The Communications Team is available to give advice, support and briefings as necessary during working hours.

As and when an issue arises which may necessitate out-of-hours contact, consideration will be given as to whether additional media cover is required, for example, through NPUK.