Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 12**

30 June 2026

Attendance at The UK National Parks' Conference – 16-18 September 2026

Purpose of the report

1. To agree Member representation at the 2026 UK National Parks' Conference.

Recommendation

2. That four Members are appointed to represent the Authority at this year's National Parks' Conference taking place in Aviemore on the 16-18 September, alongside the Acting Chief Executive.

Strategic Planning Framework

3. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework.

Background

4. The UK National Parks' Conference is held every other year; the last one being in Newcastle in 2024. The 2026 conference will be hosted by the Cairngorms National Park Authority and will take place in Aviemore on 16-18 September.

5. The theme of the conference is "Nature and People Thriving Together," and it will explore how our national parks can deliver for both nature and communities in a rapidly changing world. Inspired by the Gaelic word 'Dùthchas', which encompasses ideas of kinship, heritage and connections between nature, people and place. This word has inspired the five-year Cairngorms 2030 programme, which is putting the power to tackle the nature and climate crisis in the hands of the people who live, visit and work in the Cairngorms National Park. The ~~current draft~~ conference ~~agenda~~ programme is attached as an **Appendix**.

Consideration

6. The Authority has been allocated up to five places. This normally includes the Chair, who is expected to attend other National Park business meetings at the event, the Deputy Chair and the Chief Executive.

7. In light of this year's conference theme, it would be logical for the Member Champion for Natural Environment to attend. However, Mr Corner is unable to do so. So,

instead, it is proposed that Neil Heseltine should attend, as the Member Champion for Promoting Understanding, and a Board Member of National Parks Partnership (financing nature recovery in National Parks is a key part of the programme).

8. In line with the Authority's commitment to provide opportunities for younger people to be involved in our decision-making, it is also proposed that Katie Norgate – one of the two co-opted young Members of the Finance and Resources Committee – attend. Katie will be able to provide a younger person's perspective on the issues under discussion, and her professional experience from roles with Defra will be an asset.

Financial Implications

9. Attendance at the conference is an approved duty for the purposes of the payment of travel and subsistence. All hotel arrangements have already been made to include two nights' accommodation, meals and cost of site visits. The cost of each conference place is £750 per delegate (total = £3,750, plus travel). These costs are already covered by the 2026/27 budget approved in March.

Legal Implications

10. None

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

11. As one of the proposed attendees is a co-opted young Member of the Authority, this will strengthen not only the diversity of the delegation but also will broaden the profile of conference participants.

Gary Smith
Acting Chief Executive