Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 13**

Finance and Resources Committee

19 May 2026

Annual HR Report

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Members on key HR activities and metrics for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, specifically covering:
    - Recruitment activity and equal opportunities
    - Policy updates
    - Gender pay gap data
    - Training and development
    - Staff turnover statistics
    - Pay review update

Recommendation

2. That the report be noted.

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 33:
      Ensure that we have HR policies, procedures, terms and conditions to attract and support the right people with the right skills, core values and behaviours to deliver the Authority's work effectively.

Background

4. The HR team support staff and managers to ensure the Authority has the skills, experience and knowledge to deliver high quality and efficient services and to attract and retain people with these abilities. The aim is for the Authority to be a place where:
    - people aspire to work.
    - there is an opportunity to learn and develop.
    - achievements are acknowledged and recognised.
    - the working environment is safe, healthy, inclusive and engaging.

Recruitment Activity

5. In the year from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, 32 posts were advertised. This is slightly higher than in 2024/25 when 28 posts were advertised.

6. Recruitment costs for 2025/26 were significantly higher than previous years. This increase is due to the advertisement and costs associated with appointing the new Chief Executive (£26,469).

Year	Recruitment Costs
2022/2023	£8,599
2023/2024	£6,235
2024/2025	£16,913
2025/2026	£34,878

7. Advertising strategies are continually reviewed to ensure access to a broad and high-quality candidate pool. Most roles attracted strong interest, typically over 20 applications, with some receiving over 100.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring - Applicants

8. The monitoring of applications for the purpose of equal opportunities is an important tool to enable the Authority to ascertain at an early stage if there appear to be any areas of its work from which particular groups are excluded.

9. Monitoring data, where disclosed by applicants, is summarised at **Appendix A**.

10. With the intention of promoting inclusivity and continuing to improve the diversity of candidates, during 2025/26, we included the following statements in all job adverts:
    - We are committed to building a diverse and inclusive workplace and welcome applicants from all backgrounds to apply and join us.
    - We're proud to be a Disability Confident employer. If you have a disability and meet the essential criteria, we guarantee you an interview.

11. Each year staff are invited to undertake a workforce data questionnaire and the data is published on the Authority's website, which can be accessed here 2025-Worforce-Data. The 2026 data will be reviewed and reported within the Annual Equality Statement later in the year.

Policy Updates

12. HR policies undergo regular review. The following policies were updated and approved during 2025/26:
    - Safeguarding Policy
    - Probation Policy
    - Recruitment and Selection Policy

Gender Pay Gap

13. The gender pay gap compares the difference in average hourly pay for women and men in the labour market.

14. The gender pay gap is not simply the result of women being paid less than men for the same job. It reflects a combination of economic and social factors that influence earnings over time. For example, the unequal division of caring responsibilities within the household means that more women, than men, work part time.

15. Paying men and women differently for the same or equivalent work has been unlawful for decades. Although it does still happen in some organisations, it is not considered a major factor in explaining the gender pay gap, and an employer that has eliminated unequal pay may still have a wide gender pay gap.

16. While employers with 250 or more staff are required to publish gender pay gap data, the Authority is not subject to these regulations. For transparency, the Authority continues to calculate and monitor its position. For this report, the mean gender pay gap across all staff (full-and part-time) has been used.

17. The Authority's mean gender pay gap for 2025/26 was 8%, an increase from 6.8% in 2024/25. Contributing factors include:
    - The Chief Executive (highest paid role) is male.
    - The Director of Park Services replacement is male.
    - Female staff outnumber male staff 2:1.
    - A higher proportion of female staff occupy lower pay band roles.

18. This remains below the national average (12.8%).

Training and Development

19. Training and development opportunities continue to be important to the Authority and priorities were identified through staff appraisals completed by May 2025. The Authority allocated a slightly reduced training budget of £53.9k, supporting both in-person and virtual sessions.

20. During 2025/26 HR facilitated and coordinated a range of corporate training courses delivered both in-person and virtually. This included an in-house sickness absence management programme developed and delivered by the HR Team. A full list of courses is provided at **Appendix B**. In addition, the Authority has access to a shared e-learning portal (ELMS).

Staff turnover

21. Some degree of staff turnover is inevitable, and it's also desirable to avoid stagnation in the organisation. The influx of new people can generate new ideas and fresh ways of thinking. Turnover also gives the Authority the room to develop career progression for

existing staff. However, if labour turnover is too high, or key staff are leaving, this can damage organisational performance in a few ways, including the financial cost of replacing leavers and the loss of corporate knowledge and skills.

22. During the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, 23 staff left the Authority for the reasons detailed below:

Reason for Leaving	No. of staff	% of Leavers
Voluntary resignation	16	70%
End of Fixed Term Contract/Apprenticeship	7	30%
TOTAL	23	

23. The turnover rate in 2025/26 was 13.7%, which was the same as the previous year and below the UK average of 15% (CIPD, 2025).

Feedback from Leavers

24. During 2025/26, leavers questionnaires were issued to all staff leaving but are not compulsory. Of the 23 leavers, five provided feedback. Overall responses were positive, with constructive insights shared with relevant managers for follow-up.

Pay Review

25. An independent Pay Review was commissioned to understand how the Authority's pay structure, across all levels, compares with similar organisations, and to ensure it remains competitive and fair. The review was undertaken by Project HR Ltd, who have previously completed similar work in the National Park sector.

26. The pay review represented a significant piece of work during the year. Members have previously considered the pay review in detail; the summary below highlights the key findings and consultation themes.

27. A private report, due to the inclusion of financial and staffing information, was presented to the Finance and Resources Committee on 16 December 2025. The report included the following findings:
    - Grades F to B are broadly aligned with or above the public sector median but there will need to be some changes to ensure we remain competitive in attracting and retaining staff.
    - Grades A to S2 are below the market median.
    - Planning Officer roles are paid around the median after market rate supplements are applied.
    - Our current pay structure includes some pay bands with more than five increments. Best practice now is to limit grade spans to five increments with no overlaps between grades. This helps mitigate the risk of pay progression being linked simply to length of service (and thus age), rather than ability to carry out the role.

28. Following further consideration of budget implications, the Committee recommended the implementation costs as part of the full budget, which was approved by the

Authority on 31 March 2026. During this time, the Chief Executive shared the review findings with staff. Formal consultation then took place with UNISON and all staff on the proposed pay framework and implementation approach.

29. The consultation sought feedback on:
    - the proposed band structures and any unintended impacts
    - equality considerations
    - implementation and transition arrangements
    - communication and support requirements.

30. Consultation feedback highlighted four main themes: confidence in benchmarking data, concerns about placement into new bands and progression for longer-serving staff, views on senior-level increases in the context of financial pressures, and wider issues relating to morale, transparency and communication.

31. The feedback was carefully considered but did not introduce new evidence that materially changed the independent review findings or indicated that the proposed framework should not proceed. Benchmarking methodology and data sources were set out within the consultant's report, and no alternative evidence was presented that suggested a different market position. Concerns regarding progression and senior pay were acknowledged and reinforce the importance of clear communication and ongoing engagement during implementation.

32. Views about incremental progression and longer-serving staff reflect understandable concerns about transition. However, the proposal aims to improve consistency and align with equal pay best practice going forward.

33. Feedback on senior pay levels, morale and financial messaging has been taken seriously and highlights the importance of clear communication. While these concerns relate primarily to perception rather than the structural integrity of the proposed framework, they reinforce the need for clear explanation and ongoing engagement alongside implementation.

34. SMT and Section Heads considered the feedback received and the decision was taken to implement the new pay framework as proposed, with effect from May, backdated to 1 April 2026.

Financial Implications

35. The HR services are delivered within the allocated budget.

Legal Implications

36. Employment law and legislation changes are applied to all the HR policies, processes and practices, to ensure the Authority is compliant. The Authority continues to monitor and implement changes arising from the Employment Rights legislation to ensure ongoing compliance.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

37. Equality, diversity and inclusion are integral considerations across all HR practices. The Authority is committed to continuously exploring ways to enhance the diversity of its workforce and to attract a broad range of candidates. Providing and promoting a culture of respect, inclusion, and belonging remains a core priority in the development and implementation of HR policies and processes.

Conclusion

38. In conclusion, the HR team has delivered significant achievements over the past year, including the successful recruitment of hard-to-fill roles, enhancement of key policies, and the co-ordination of diverse training programmes. The ongoing focus remains on advising managers, supporting staff, strengthening diversity, and aligning HR practices with the Authority's vision for the future.

Vikki Thomas
Head of HR

Appendix A - Equal Opportunities Monitoring Statistics – Applicants

Age

	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Under 18 years	0%	0.2%	0.3%	0.7%	1%
18 – 25 years	31%	30.5%	21%	26%	27%
26 – 34 years	28%	28.5%	24%	26%	32%
35 – 44 years	13.5%	17%	22%	20%	15%
45 – 54 years	13%	15%	19%	14%	13%
55 – 64 years	12.5%	8%	13%	11%	11%
65 years and above	2%	0.8%	0.7%	1.7%	1%

Disability

	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Disability declared	12.5%	12.5%	8.7%	8.8%	7%

The Authority has a policy, which is consistent with Equality law, that all applicants who declare a disability will be shortlisted if they demonstrate that they meet the essential criteria within their application form.

Gender

	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Female	51%	47%	49.8%	44.5%	60%
Male	45.5%	50%	47%	53.8%	40%
Other	1%	1%	1.1%	0.1%	
Prefer not to say	2.5%	2%	2.1%	1.6%	

During 2023/24, the Authority introduced a question asking candidates if their gender identity matched their sex as registered at birth.

Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth

	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Yes	96%	96%	97%	96.6%
No	1.4%	1.7%	0.4%	1.1%
Prefer not to say	2.6%	2.3%	2.6%	2.3%

Ethnic Origin

	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
White	90%	89%	91%	87.4%	91.4%
Black	1%	1.8%	0.8%	1.2%	1.7%
Asian	3.9%	3.5%	2.3%	4.9%	2.4%
Mixed	2.4%	2.3%	2%	2.2%	1.8%
Other	0.7%	1.1%	0.3%	1.1%	0.4%
Prefer not to say	2%	2.3%	3.6%	3.2%	2.3%

Sexual Orientations

	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Heterosexual/straight	71.9%	76%	80%	79.8%	83.4%
Gay man	1.4%	1.8%	1.7%	2.1%	1.4%
Gay woman/lesbian	2.9%	2.6%	0.9%	1.5%	3%
Bisexual	11.4%	8.7%	5.6%	6.7%	5%
Other	1.7%	2.1%	1.8%	1.5%	0.8%
Prefer not to say	10.7%	8.7%	10%	8.4%	6.4%

Marital Status

	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Single	43.4%	47%	31%	42.5%	53.2%
Married	25.5%	24%	35%	31.2%	28%
Civil partnership	2.4%	1.4%	1.7%	1.5%	
Co-habiting	14.6%	16%	19%	16.7%	3.1%
Divorced	2.6%	3.7%	6%	2.6%	1.1%
Widowed	0.7%	0.7%	0%	0%	0.4%
Separated	2%	0.7%	1.5%	0.2%	0.3%
Other	2.7%	2.5%	0.2%	1%	9.6%
Prefer not to say	6.1%	4%	5.6%	4.3%	4.3%

We currently don’t request or monitor the protected characteristic of ‘religion or belief’.

Appendix B - Training and Development Courses during 2024/25

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

- CDM Regulations
- De-escalation and conflict management
- Emergency First Aid at Work
- Fire Warden Training
- IOSH Managing Safely
- Legionella
- Manual Handling
- Mental Health Awareness
- Mental Health First Aid
- Outdoor First Aid
- Risk Assessment and Risk Management
- Working at Height

Management Training

- Emerging Managers
- Managing Sickness Absence
- Preventing Sexual Harassment at Work
- Project Management
- Women Advancing in Leadership

Personal Skills and development

- Advanced Safeguarding
- Communicating with Impact
- Coping with and managing workplace stress
- Individual Coaching Sessions
- Emotional Intelligence
- Grief and Bereavement
- How to Manage your Inbox
- Microsoft Excel (Introduction, Intermediate, Advanced)
- Microsoft Outlook Tips and Tricks
- Microsoft Word (Introduction, Intermediate, Advanced)
- Minute Taking
- Nutrition and Balancing your Diet
- Personal Resilience
- Positive Self-Motivation
- Presentation Skills
- SharePoint
- Time Management and Managing Multiple Priorities

Other

- Apprentice and trainee group and networking days
- Planning for retirement

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