Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 13**

National Park Authority Meeting

30 June 2026

Progress on Authority Objectives 2025-26

Purpose of the Report

1. To report on the Authority's performance towards achieving our objectives in 2025/26.

Recommendation

2. That Members note the progress made towards achieving the Authority's objectives.

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. Each year, the Authority publishes its Corporate Plan, setting out our objectives for the next few years. For each objective, this includes an indication of the progress that we intend to make by the end of that particular financial year.

5. Members will be aware that the 2025-26 Corporate Plan objectives were effectively a 'roll-forward' – including a number that were 'legacies' from the former National Park Management Plan, and were no longer capable of being achieved. This was an interim measure pending the completion of the new National Park Management Plan. The Corporate Plan objectives for 2026-27 (agreed in December) look very different.

Summary of overall performance

6. The **Annex** gives a brief assessment of progress on each of the objectives, and its overall status as follows:
    - 'Achieved' - we have achieved the objective by the due date;
    - 'On course- - we are on course to achieve the objective by the due date;

- ‘Near miss’ - we were close to achieving the objective by the due date;
- ‘Not achieved’ - we are not close to achieving the objective by the due date.

7. Of the 33 objectives, 25 (76%) were achieved or remain on course. Of the 11 priority objectives (shown in bold in the annex), 9 (82%) were achieved or remained on course. These included:
    - £1.5 million in grants paid to farmers and land managers through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, supporting farm businesses and bringing benefits for nature, climate, people and place [1];
    - 88% of Public Rights of Way reported to be ‘Easy to Use’ – maintaining an average of 90% over the past five years [6];
    - Through Dark Skies and Cheese Festivals and Arts Council England-funded projects we ran inspirational activities for over 4,700 people [7];
    - Launched a digital Access Hub, and made significant improvements to accessibility at Cautley, Stainforth, Grassington and Hawes [8];
    - Over 1,300 activity days provided for under-served groups that enable them to access the special qualities of the National Park, and increase their understanding, enjoyment, health and well-being [9];
    - Over 2,000 young people from in and around the National Park inspired to explore and enhance their environment [10];
    - The final full year of Tees-Swale: Naturally Connected was completed, including the first phase of works to reduce pollution from historical lead-mining sites on Barney Beck in Swaledale [17];
    - Supported planting of 276 ha of native broadleaved and mixed woodland over the last 5 years, including 24 ha this year through Grow Back Greener [20];
    - 73% of ‘minor’ and 88% of ‘other’ planning applications determined within Government target times or agreed extensions [23].

8. Other achievements include:
    - 24 barns were re-used/repaired/restored, including 5 funded by FiPL [3];
    - Coast-to-Coast path National Trail formally opened in March. Completed 2.2km of flagging at White Mossy Hill. 7 creation agreements, 12 diversion orders and 1 creation order completed [14];
    - Over £111,000 in grants from the Sustainable Development Fund, helping to support 16 local projects worth almost £370,000 [22];
    - Completed the Examination hearings stage and issued the final consultation on the Main Modifications for the new Local Plan [24];
    - A new National Park Management Plan (2025-30) was completed and launched by the NPMP Partnership [27];
    - Gross expenditure was £13.4m (£3.5m ahead of our objective) albeit slightly down from 2024/25’s record high [28];

9. Of the objectives that related to priority programmes, 2 were not achieved:
    - Restoration of species-rich grassland – 66 ha were restored/created through Authority action or funding, taking the cumulative total to 138 ha (just over 50% of the target). The shortfall is due to the shutdown of the national SFI and CS Higher Tier schemes in 2025 [16];
    - No Hen Harriers bred in the National Park in 2025 and incidents of illegal persecution of raptors are still being reported [19];

10. A more detailed report covering all aspects of the Authority's performance will go to the Audit and Review Committee in July.

Financial and Legal Implications

11. None.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

12. The achievement of several of the objectives – notably nos. 8, 9 and 10 – had direct benefits in terms of widening access to the National Park and to the services provided by the National Park Authority, including for younger people and those with health conditions.

Climate Change Implications

13. The achievement of several objectives – notably nos. 1, 16 and 20 – will have long-term benefits in sequestering carbon. It is estimated that the woodland the Authority has helped farmers and landowners to create over the last 5 years will sequester over 100,000 tonnes of CO_2 over the next 50 years.

Conclusion

14. Three-quarters of the Authority's objectives were achieved – an increase on each of the last three years, despite several long-standing 'legacy' issues with objectives from the former National Park Management Plan. A new set of Corporate Plan objectives were approved in December and will form the basis for future reporting.

Gary Smith
Acting Chief Executive

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