Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 18**

30 June 2026

Member Feedback on Partnership Representation and Member Champions' Reports – Natural Environment and Corporate Management

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide feedback from meetings attended by Members as representatives of the National Park Authority since the last Authority meeting.

Recommendation

2. That Members consider and note the reports from the Authority's representatives.

Strategic Framework

3. The information and recommendation contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and support the strategic planning framework:

   - Corporate Plan Objective 31

     Provide high quality, efficient and effective services and communications

     to the public and other stakeholders, achieving substantial assurance through an annual Customer Service Audit.

Background

4. Members represent the Authority on a wide variety of Partnerships and, to keep Members and officers updated on this representation, formal reports are brought to each Authority meeting.

5. Member Champions are also engaged in a wide range of activities. Champions take turns in bringing annual reports to the Authority meetings. Reports from the Member Champions for Cultural Heritage and Recreation Management are appended to this report.

6. These formal reports provide the opportunity to update Members on the work of the various partnerships we are involved with, the chance to question Member representatives and Champions and a means by which we can continually assess the value of these partnerships and Champion roles.

7. The **Appendices** include:
    1. A list of Partnership Meetings attended in the last quarter;
    2. The reports of the Member Champions for Natural Environment and Corporate Management.

Financial Implications

8. None

Legal Implications

9. None

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

10. None

Rebecca Eslick
Committees Officer

Appendix 1

Partnership Meetings April 2026 – June 2026

Title	Member	Date	Attended	Report
1. Yorkshire Dales Access Forum	L Bushby N Heseltine	12/5/26	No Yes	Verbal Report to be provided in September

Appendix 2

a) Annual Report - Member Champion for Natural Environment

Member Champion duties undertaken

- Represented the Authority at the formal launch of the Cumbria (Penrith, December) and the Lancashire (Brockholes, March) Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and at the November 'Launch of Ingleborough into the King's Series of National Nature Reserves'.
- Participated in the performance review of the management of SSSIs under the Authority's ownership/management.
- Attended the formal launch in October of the YDNP Management Plan Forum, having contributed to the development of the wildlife section of the plan.
- Representation at the Farming & Land Management Forum and the Dales Biodiversity Forum, contributing to the refocused new Terms of Reference for the latter.
- Participation in the monthly Land Management Section (LMS) meetings, including site visits.
- Attendance of the Conservation and Community Directorate Management Team meetings.
- Participation in nature-related ad hoc events, presentations, and meetings.
- Amendment/sign-off of relevant press releases.

Programme overview/current focus/challenges

Following the change in LMS Leadership, the section was restructured with a strengthening of project management delivery and integrated farm advice capability. Improved focus on delivering the LMS targets in the Management Plan.

Focus in the **wildlife** area has been on operationalising the delivery of the Nature Recovery Plan and its linkage to the Nature Recovery Strategies of our host unitary and combined Authorities which have now all been adopted. The Plan has been successfully incorporated into the NP Management Plan; the wildlife and the climate objectives point to the crucial role of our farmers and landowners, including through sensitive livestock grazing and regenerative farming practices.

The Biodiversity Forum, under a new chair, has been restructured to focus on delivery of the Nature Recovery and Management Plan. A Delivery Group and a Technical Advisory group have been established. Sub-groups are determining the monitoring regime for species that need bespoke conservation action and the approach to eradication of invasive non-native species. A Red Squirrel project, funded by Natural England, was completed.

Work has progressed on identifying and supporting Habitat Banks in the NP for Biodiversity Net Gain. £200k of funding was secured from the National Lottery for a one year pre-development phase of the 'Jewels of the Dales' project to restore species-rich grasslands across the NP through sustainable farming; the project is currently being staffed. A 'Home for House Birds' project with YDMT and the RSPB is delivering well, supporting local communities to take action to conserve local populations of four iconic house-nesting bird species.

Regarding raptor persecution, dispiritingly, cases continue though the Police National Wildlife Crime Unit, operating under a new strategy, are being more active and have visited landowners in the Dales. A Dales' gamekeeper was convicted in January of conspiring to kill a Hen Harrier on the Conistone & Grassington Estate, the first such conviction in England; he was fined a paltry £1500.

In the **farming** area, the very successful Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme was extended for a further 3 years due with funding of £1.7 mln per year. The funding for current year was fully disbursed and there are already over 75 expressions of interest for projects in 2026/7. An additional £950k pa from a new Wildlife-Rich Habitat Fund is now available to support creation of 'wildlife-rich' habitat outside of SSSIs. Officers are continuing to do a great job in helping farmers and land managers to make the most of this funding and to navigate the evolving Environmental Land Management Schemes. Semer Water (water quality) project completed. 'Barricading the Bain' water quality project underway.

Regarding **Woodlands,** our team are directly responsible for delivery of the Grow Back Greener (Woodland Trust) programme, initiated in 2021, which was extended to March 2026, almost achieving the target of 25 ha of native woodland creation for current year. A Grow Back Greener project review will be undertaken under the auspices of the Audit & Review committee. Limited progress on increasing % of woodland in YDNP under active management.

A bid was made to the NLHF with the Woodland Trust and Nidderdale NL for an Ancient Woodland revival project. We have worked with White Rose Forest towards a Trees for Climate 2 bid to DEFRA. Awaiting outcome to both.

High level of applications throughout the 12 months regarding protected trees work, likewise with tree related planning application consultations. A light touch review of the 2021 Dales Woodland Strategy is being completed.

The 5-vear Tees-Swale nature recovery project was completed in September.

Projects/funding

Good momentum continues in identifying and maturing funding opportunities, and a project management framework has been developed.

Challenges/Opportunities

- Making the most of, with partners, the positive opportunities presented by recent additional government funding for nature recovery and actively managing a potential project funnel.
- Much of our nature recovery ambition depends upon the successful adoption of nature friendly farming and an ELMS system that enables it. The introduction of ELMS has been faltering, e.g., recent changes to the Sustainable Funding Initiative, particularly regarding species rich grassland, present significant lost potential income to our farmers and may impact nature recovery.

Mark Corner
Member Champion Natural Environment

b) Annual Report - Member Champion for Corporate Management

Member Champion duties undertaken

1. Contacted Tom Riordan the 2nd Permanent Secretary, Department of Health and Social Care to request a meeting on social prescribing. Tom introduced us to his Deputy Director Mark Joannides and we had a positive meeting. In addition, I followed this meeting through with an introduction to the Shared Prosperity Fund Team at The Mayoral Combined Authority with a view to an application being made for Social Prescribing work with the YDNPA. We collaborated on a Protected Landscape partnership bid for the regional Green Social Prescription trial. We completed a successful trial and have secured partnership funding for further work in this area.

2. The recruitment of co-opted young Members to the Finance and Resources Committee has been a great success and we are looking forwards to what other contributions they can make to the Authority. Most recently they were involved in the recruitment process for the new CEO.

Progress

1. Opening of the Southern area Ranger base at Langcliffe Quarry.
2. Commented on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, commented on Sickness Absence Policy, Input to Member Personal Development Review discussions.
3. Considered the Accommodation and Mileage and Subsistence review paper prior to this going to SMT.

4. Commented on the EDI Annual Statement and Probation Policy.
5. Contributed to the informal finance meetings in support of the Chief Executive and other Members.
6. Supported the EDI Working Group whose officers presented at the CEO staff webinar in February.

Challenges

1. The additional capital works approved at the F&R Committee meeting on 20th May 2025. Whilst the late settlement from DEFRA has been welcome for 2026/27 and beyond, the management of spend will be a challenge.
2. The new Authority website being developed to be launched in 2026. This is challenging to make sure we get this right. We liaised with colleagues from other National Park Authorities who have recently developed websites.

Climate considerations

1. We are doing very well reducing our carbon emissions, but the corporate objective will be particularly challenging to achieve, as we have completed the more significant projects.
2. Through the DEFRA Cap Ex budgets continuing to put more projects in place.

Julie Hutton
Member Champion Corporate Management