Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 2**
Audit and Review Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at the YDNPA offices, Yoredale, Bainbridge, Leyburn DL8 3EL on Tuesday 25 November 2025 at 10:30am.

Members Present:

Lizzie Bushby, Mark Corner (Chair), Robert Heseltine, David Ireton, Simon Myers, Yvonne Peacock, Steve Shaw Wright, Graham Simpkins

Copies of all documents considered are in the minute book

The Chair welcomed Gavin Barker (External Auditor, Forvis Mazars LLP)

22/25 Apologies

Apologies were received from Saira Ali, Richard Ingram, Allen Kirkbride

23/25 Minutes

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2025, omitted the following:
It was noted that some of the charts showing the NPA family indicators had been left out of the appendix. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that this was inadvertent and confirmed that the full set would be included as normal next year.
It was agreed to amend and approve at the next scheduled meeting.

24/25 Public Questions/Statements

No notifications of public questions or of the intention to make a statement had been received.

25/25 Declarations of Lobbying

No declarations of lobbying were made at the meeting.

26/25 Corporate Plan 2025/26 - 6 month progress report

Considered the report and presentation of the Performance Manager and the Director of Conservation and Community.

The Performance Manager pointed out a correction to the report under Overall Progress at para 7: 27 (82%) of the objectives are achieved or on course, not 28 (85%).

Member queries included the following:

- Who was responsible for setting the Local Plan Examination programme? The Director of Conservation and Community explained this is set by the Planning Inspectorate.
- Reference was made to a letter raising objections to the Local Plan Examination process, which had been circulated to some Members but not all. The Director agreed to investigate and respond to Members direct.
- Would performance of Wildlife objective still be 25 % if measured against the new National Park Management Plan? Other woodland elements are not in the wildlife section. Does the Authority need a different way of monitoring and recording performance particularly in relation to wildlife and nature? The Director of Conservation and Community responded that the objectives are taken from the NPMP. The NPMP is the responsibility of a much wider partnership, and objectives for nature appear under all 6 of the ambitions. So, just looking at the wildlife ambition doesn't give the full picture. It is intended to recommend to Members (at the next Authority meeting) that – for 2026-27 onwards – the Authority only includes in its Corporate Plan those objectives for nature that it has significant control over. This will mean the Corporate Plan is more realistic, whilst the NPMP remains very ambitious. Hopefully, Government funding will support this ambition in the future. The Chair added that the Authority shouldn't lose sight that they are an influencer and custodian of the whole Management Plan.
- Action 21.1 – Could the short list of rural affordable exception sites be shared with Members? The Director of Conservation and Community explained that, in effect, there are two lists – the reported list now and then a further set of sites that have come forward as part of the Local Plan process but have not been chosen as allocated sites (the latter group is still subject to the final decision of the Planning Inspector during the examination process so cannot be shared yet).

The Director of Conservation and Community pointed out that there was one further action that needs to be revised but which was not included in the report. This relates to the new Design Guide (Action 24.5). The Guide would need to go out for public consultation so the version produced in March will only be a draft, not the final version.

Resolved – To approve the recommendations and the revisions to the Action Plan for the remainder of the year.

27/25 Annual Governance Report

Considered and **noted** – the report of the Director of Corporate Services.

The Director pointed out that a number of changes are proposed in Appendix A. Appendix E covers data breaches, which show a sharp increase compared to last year. This area has previously been under-reported. The Director of Corporate Services was satisfied that officers engage well with data protection and will be monitoring carefully over the next 12 months to see if this year figure was a spike or if any changes are needed to systems.

Member queries and discussion included the following:

- Page 40 – The Authority has a lot of policies – do we have a feel that staff are looked after sufficiently and are the policies relating to staff wellbeing being delivered? The Director of Corporate Services reassured Members that adherence to policies in terms of staff wellbeing was shown by the 'Investors In People award to be at Silver level, so that's good in terms of staff satisfaction.

28/25 Annual Risk Management Review

Considered and **Noted** the report and presentation of the Director of Corporate Services

The Director of Corporate Services point out that the business continuity, no 8 on the Strategic Risk Register has increased due to the increased risk of cyber attacks. Strategic Risks 2, 3, 4 & 6 have been reduced.

Member queries and discussion included the following:

- A new Chief Executive is to be appointed - has any work been carried out on the risks surrounding? The Director of Corporate Services responded that a report on the CEO recruitment will be going to the Authority in December and there is a section on relevant risks.
- Is there a risk to government cutting core funding? The Chief Executive responded that the revenue grant will be a flat settlement over 3 years, which will help with planning. Unsure what will be allocated in terms of capital funding but there is an assumption that government will continue to focus on capital investment. It may well be February before the Authority knows its Grant from Defra.

Resolved - To **approve** the Strategic Risk Register containing all identifiable higher level risks that Audit & Review Committee requires to be monitored.

29/25 Review of Partnerships

Considered and **noted** the report of the Deputy Chief Executive in particular the revised list of strategic partnerships (Appendix B) and the range and scale of current project partnerships (Appendix C).

Member queries and discussion included the following:

- There isn't a housing partnership that Members are represented on anymore – the link with the housing board has disappeared, where do planning and policy officers receive information? Strategic Housing Authority officers and Authority planning officers have a good working relationship. The Director of Conservation and Community to consider appropriate arrangements for North Yorkshire Council and others to report progress on housing developments in the National Park.

30/25 Major project Review – Access Unlimited: Generation Green 2

Considered and **noted** the report of the Head of Access and Engagement.
Members queries and discussion included the following:

- Is there any way of measuring repeat visits? Repeat visits are hard to track particularly on a large scale. Although through core work there is evidence from ‘case studies’ that participants taking part, go on to join other projects and some have become trainees, and this has resulted in employment.
- Residentials which are logistically difficult - are there any findings that people who have been on the residential programme have a deeper connection as a result? Residentials - yes there is some evidence to show there is a of a deeper connection, particularly younger children who haven’t accessed outdoors before. But it is difficult and opportunities to work with partnership organisations whose core work it is are being explored.
- Is the payment per head model seen elsewhere or is it just in this instance? Payment per head is a requirement from Defra and Dept of Culture Media and Sport funded projects.

31/25 Audit Progress Report 2024/25

Considered and **noted** the report of the Head of Finance and the report of the external Auditors, Forvis Mazars.

The external auditor pointed out that National guidance has still not been issued but is expected shortly.

32/25 Draft Auditors Annual Report 2024/25

Considered and **noted** the report of the Head of Finance.

The Auditor was able to confirm there was no significant weakness in arrangements.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 12:10 p.m.