YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY	**ITEM 10**
Date:	**12 December 2023**
Report:	**CHAIR'S REPORT**

ENGAGEMENTS

- Since the last meeting of the Authority, the Chair has been involved in the following:-

Events

- Along with the CEO, attended the EUROPARC Conference in Leeuwarden, Netherlands. The Conference theme was 'Tribute to our landscape, where nature and people meet in harmony'. – see my report at **Appendix 1.**
- A memorial Quaker Meeting for Wilf Fenten (a former NPA board member)
- The Authority's Autumn Planning Training on Rural Housing
- A FiPL online workshop for all Local Assessment Panels from every protected landscape in England. The workshop serves as a platform for fostering a shared understanding of the FiPL program, collecting feedback and exchanging experiences of being a Local Assessment Panel member, encompassing both best practices and the challenges members may encounter when approving projects.
- As Chair of NPE, giving a presentation on *'Can farming ever be truly nature friendly?'* at Country Landowner's Association Rural Business Conference in London. The theme of the Conference is Competing Visions: The Future of Land. To view the programme for the day please click **here**.

Meetings

- Along with the CEO an on-line meeting with the CEO & Leader of Westmorland & Furness Council.
- An NPE Board meeting held in the New Forest National Park
- Along with the CEO, an on-line meeting with Defra to discuss Secretary of State Member recruitment in 2024
- A Landscape Recovery meeting with Wild Ingleborough
- Chaired the Autumn Parish Forum meeting on-line which was attended by representatives from 16 parishes within the National Park
- A monthly catchup meeting with the Director of NPE.
- National Park Management Plan Steering Group Meeting
- As Chair of NPE an on-line Protected Landscapes Partnership meeting involving the Executive Director of NPE, Chairs & CEOs of Natural England, National Association for AONBs and National Trails UK
- Dales Volunteers Autumn meeting held at Grassington Town Hall
- Chaired a meeting of Member Champions
- A National Parks Partnership Extraordinary General meeting

- A post-National Parks Partnership Board Briefing
- Policy Development Forum
- Chaired a Farming in Protected Landscapes Local Assessment Panel

The Deputy Chair has attended the following events on my behalf:

- The Rite of Institution and Induction of Reverend Wood to the Benefice of Linton, Burnsall and Rylstone by Bishop of Leeds.
- Ripon Cathedral Rural Forum event:- The Missing Generation – how to attract, engage and retain young people in North Yorkshire.
- Skipton's annual Remembrance parade and church service
- The Authority's annual full staff meeting

Neil Heseltine
Chair

Background documents: None
24 November 2023

Appendix 1

EUROPARC Conference 2023

This year's EUROPARC Conference was held in Leeuwarden in the Netherlands. The Conference theme was '*Tribute to our landscape, where nature and people meet in harmony*'. The Conference also celebrated 50 years since the EUROPARC Federation was founded in 1973.

There were around 430 delegates at the Conference. EUROPARC Federation contains 413 organisations in 38 countries.

This was a somewhat lengthier conference which was made rather longer as it involved 6 train journeys from the north of England to Leeuwarden, which nestles in the north-east of the Netherlands in a region called Friesland.

The UK was well represented as evidenced by a European Atlantic Isles (one of 8 sections within the Federation) meeting which was the best attended for a good number of years. The programme reflected the theme of the Conference and the emphasis on the future was recognised by just under 100 delegates under the age of 30. These came from regions all over Europe with a good number travelling from the UK. The North York Moors NPA had a particularly strong presence.

The Conference kicked off with a General Assembly. This was as dry as it sounded. Imagine an AGM where you spend a couple of hours working through the business of a sizeable organisation. Added to this were a number of rather strange votes which were reminiscent of a late 1970's Trade Union meeting with a series of raised hands taking an interminable amount of time to count. Ah well - democracy in action. The afternoon session of the first day improved considerably with an excellent welcome from the Mayor of Leeuwarden who presented and amazing video on how part of the greening of the city involved creating green corridors from 1000 planted trees which were moved around the city during the summer months. This first day also included a session entitled 'Nature of Humans – Pathways to a True Partnership'. The involved a presentation by young people from across a range of organisations talking about their hopes and aspirations for the future. One of the most moving presentations came from a young woman from Pembrokeshire Coast NPA who spoke explicitly of the fears of her generation for the future of the planet.

The second day kicked off with a number of keynote speakers. These came from the Dutch government, the European Commission and the Head of the Netherlands Institute of Ecology. These were quite stimulating presentations which introduced the Dutch approach to nature, biodiversity and national parks; identifying the most important tasks and challenges for the future. The European Commissioner talked about the EU Green Deal and the opportunities it provided for nature and people. At this point the UK delegates took a long hard look at their shoes. The final presentation set out a view on how to improve biodiversity across the various stakeholders operating within protected landscapes. It was a very challenging and interesting talk with many of the themes common to the situation we find in UK protected landscapes.
The afternoon session involved a rather lengthy session with the current and five former Presidents of the Europarc Federation. This was essentially a Q&A session with the audience, which, although interesting, could have been shortened by about a half. This

second day also provided the opportunity for delegates to meet a range of organisations operating in protected landscapes across Europe in a ‘marketplace’ which was set up in the hotel. This was a real opportunity to dive more deeply into specific and detailed areas of interest. The third day involved a series of field trips in the Netherland looking at a range of different issues. Some of these set off at 6am though I did notice the Chief Executive appeared to be on a trip which left at the latest possible time – 9am. His was a trip to the Wadden Sea area looking at interpretative guidance about different landscape features and an extraordinary engineering feat where the Dutch had installed a 40 km dyke and then undertaken a major series of land reclamation.

My own trip involved a visit to a national park in central Netherlands. Parks in the Netherlands are very different to our own in the British Isles. They are designated as Nature Parks - not on beauty or special qualities - but on the basis that the land designated is not suitable for farming or it is in an inaccessible place.

We looked at a farm within a nature park, which had seen the farmer over a period of some decades reaching out to those living on the streets in Amsterdam in a seemingly philanthropic act of offering a job, life and livelihood to those less fortunate than himself.

Some aspects of this philanthropism had good pointers which could be taken away as learning points: the health and wellbeing aspect of putting people in nature and outdoor spaces from a city environment for example. Other aspects of this ‘offer’ looked less philanthropic to me, when taking into account the more modern ethos and take on occupational work relevant in today’s world.

The final day involved a series of talks which looked at the different variety of protected landscapes within Europe, and how you might find some degree of cooperation between all the organisations and individuals which worked and operated within them. This was then followed by a variety of ‘inspiration sessions’ where delegates could attend several different very specific workshops. The day concluded with a very interactive session on the development of a joint conference statement based on the experience and findings that took place during the conference.

My overall experience of this Europarc Conference in Holland was one of enjoyable time spent with other officers from protected landscapes. I would encourage all members to take part in Europarc activities next year. These will be more accessible due to the fact that, rather than a single conference, there will be a series of events next year taking place in the regions – the ‘Atlantic Isles’ section which includes the UK and Ireland being only one of the regions which will be hosting Europarc events.

In summary then, a helpful conference – as they always are – with an opportunity to listen to and discuss a range of matters that are impacting on protected landscapes across Europe. As ever, the contrast between those parks operating more in wilderness and those that are living, working landscapes was increasingly stark. However, there was a real commonality about the problems that we all faced which were all defined around the climate and nature emergencies.