Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 16**

25 June 2024

Member Feedback On Partnership Representation and Member Champions' Reports

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(s) 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, and so maintain the Customer
    - Members Duties and responsibilities December 2020 (updated 2023).

Background

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

4. 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 Development Management and Natural Environment are attached at **Appendix 3**.

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

6. The **Appendices** include:

1) A list of Partnership Meetings attended in the last quarter;
2) Reports from the relevant Partnership meetings; and
3) The reports of the Member Champions for Development Management and Natural Environment.

Financial Implications

4. None

Legal Implications

5. None

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

6. None

Rebecca Eslick
Committees Officer

Appendix 1

List of Partnership Meetings March 2024 – June 2024

Title	Member	Date	Attended	Report
1. Campaign for National Parks	Mark Corner	22/5/24	Yes	See Report Appendix 2
2. National Park Management Plan Steering Group	N Heseltine	12/06/24	Yes	See Chairs Report
3. National Parks England	N Heseltine	17/04/24 05/06/24	Yes Yes	See Chairs Report
4. Farming and Land Management Forum	Mark Corner & Neil Heseltine	13/06/24	No Yes	Verbal update
5. North Yorkshire Shared Prosperity Fund Partnership	Richard Foster	13/06/24	Yes	Verbal update
6. Housing Provision Advisory Group	Richard Foster	25/04/24	No	No Report
7. Yorkshire Dales Access Forum	Lizzie Bushby & Neil Heseltine	15/05/24	Yes Yes	See Report Appendix 2
8. Biodiversity Forum	Mark Corner	25/04/24	Yes	See Report at Appendix 2

Appendix 2

Reports on Partnership Meetings

Yorkshire Dales National Park Biodiversity Forum

The Forum met on 25th April in West Marton Village Hall.

The meeting focused on the implementation of the Nature Recovery Plan. The Plan has an objective that by 2040, 90% of species in Category 1 (currently 40 species) are in stable or increasing populations. It was agreed to set up a sub-group to determine how best to monitor the Category 1 species (where bespoke conservation action above and beyond habitat/site management is required, for example for curlew). This group will also consider how to monitor species that are indicators of a healthy environment. The aim is to have a final monitoring plan ready for the January 2025 Forum meeting. A separate sub-group will also be established to guide and monitor implementation of the habitat improvement elements of the plan.

The Forum recognised that meeting the objectives of the plan depends upon many organisations delivering in their own areas and that coordination and information sharing is critical.

Members of the Forum were complimentary regarding the recently published Executive Summary of the Plan.

The unitary and combined authorities are developing their Local Nature Recovery Strategies, due for completion in March 2025, and the YDNP Nature Recovery Plan is providing helpful input to this process.

The annual work plan for the Forum was agreed.

The Forum discussed and agreed that it was important that the Forum be engaged in the YDNP Management Plan process and tasked the chair to formally request that he be a member of the Management Plan Steering Group. Following this request, the chair has been invited to be a member of the drafting group for the 'Home to the Finest Wildlife' theme of the Management Plan.

Subsequent to the meeting an interesting and informative site visit was made to see the rewilding project at Broughton Hall, focused mainly on the planting to date of 220,000 trees (and plastic tree shelters!).

Mark Corner, Member Champion for the Natural Environment

Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum

The forum met at Yoredale, Bainbridge on Tuesday 15th May 2024

No Fence Collars

- Matthew Gardner gave a short presentation on no fence collars at the National Trust's Midsomer Hill. It requires some training but has proved very successful, taking away fencing issues/conflicts with paths.

PRoW Annual Report

- Alan Hulme shared the draft Public Rights of Way Annual Report and provided an update re the 5-year average ease of use target (89% for 2023), external income including from National Trails (Pennine Way and Coast to Coast), volunteer support (the equivalent of 8 full time staff in 2023) and ongoing discussions with NYC re contributions towards delivering their statutory purposes.

Active Travel Plan

- Rebecca Greenfield gave an update re a grant from Active Travel England to support the development for safe, accessible walking, wheeling and horse-riding routes across the national park – to be developed in house with funding to be spent by March 2025.

Coast to Coast

- Coast to Coast PM Angela Hobson provided an update on legal works which is now underway (Reeth Bottoms Diversion order confirmed), practical work completed (replacement footbridge for Swinner Gill installed Feb 2024, and tender returns for works on White Mossy Hill were expected 29th May), and a forthcoming access review by Leonard Cheshire.

Accessibility Training

- Training session scheduled for 5th July at Aysgarth Falls.

Lizzie Bushby
Member Champion Recreation Management

Appendix 3

a) Annual & End of Term Report - Member Champion for Development Management - June 2024

Since becoming Member Champion for Development Management I have participated in two reviews of our planning activities. Firstly, on the operation of the Planning Committee "Review the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Planning Committee Arrangements" concluded in 2020. All the recommendations have now been implemented. Last year saw the conclusion of the delayed "Performance Review of Development Management". This found that the Authority provides a very good Development Management Service. Recommendations from this review are being implemented to ensure we continue to provide a service that is both cost-effective and efficient.

I have aimed to improve communication with Members, the media and public and to demonstrate the positive and user-friendly nature of YDNPA planning activities.

For those living in the park this has included features in Dales newspaper circulating to all homes in the Park. In the past this has covered positive case histories of domestic developments. This year it included a double page spread in the winter edition of Dales entitled "Planning Matters" featuring local houses for local people, our Planning Advice Service and clear graphics to highlight the highly satisfactory work of our planning service.

This year was the third year of the annual planning seminar for Parish Council/Meetings There was a good turnout with 31 parishes registering and 24 attending on the night. The formal programme was ably led by Katherine Wood and Wendy Thompson explain how parishes could contribute effectively in the planning process. It updated the parishes on Biodiversity Net Gain; new temporary campsite legislation and concluded with a lively Q & A session.

Planning performance for the last financial year has been good. After a record level of applications in the year ending Mar 2022 (717), the level of applications is back to normal with 672 in the year to March 2024. Of 672 applications received 95% were approved. As a direct result of the second Development Management review 53% of applications were determined within 8 weeks up from 46% in the previous year. We received 12 appeals - 6 have been determined - three were dismissed and three allowed.

The second Development Management review highlighted the problem of applications which were not valid on receipt. Over the last 5 years 44% of applications were invalid on receipt. This is similar to experience in other National Parks. It wastes considerable time and resources. It is frustrating for the applicant and contributes greatly towards a poor image of the planning process. Since highlighting the problem in the last Development Management review we have begun to take steps to improve this situation. This has proved effective and worthwhile as the number valid on receipt in the last year has increased to 52% (Last year 47%). Further steps are planned to help continue this positive trend.

Enforcement - we closed 163 cases against a target of 75. This effectively deals with the backlog. We are now actively monitoring and chasing up landscape planting conditions.

The long running enforcement case of Bainbridge Ings came to a conclusion when the owner pleaded guilty on the first day of trial by jury. We expect to be awarded full costs and a large fine on the miscreant who has already begun to comply with the enforcement.

On the housing front we gave permission for 98 dwellings ahead of the target of 85. Ten were for affordable houses, 26 local occupancies and 31 local occupancy/holiday let. The breakdown of new houses is roughly half conversion and half new build. We remain heavily reliant on barn conversions. To try to improve the delivery of affordable housing, we shall be aiming to allocate appropriate sites in settlements in the new local plan: working with rural housing enablers and lobbying for allocation of second home council tax to be spent on affordable housing in the Park.

Development Management “Facts and Figures” are currently being prepared for circulation to Members. They will highlight latest figures and current trends on key policies.

To help communicate with the media, key opinion formers and the public I have endorsed appropriate press releases, position statements and news items.

Going forward, we have unfinished business in taking further measures to continue to get a greater proportion of applications valid on receipt; continuing to demystify the planning process and taking steps towards more affordable housing in the Dales.

Jim Munday

b) Annual & End of Term Report - Member Champion for Natural Environment - June 2024

My activities and contribution in the role

- Representation at the Dales Biodiversity Forum.
- Representation and acting chair of the Dales Woodland Forum.
- Attendance of the Farming and Land Management Forum.
- Active contribution to the publication of the Nature Recovery Plan.
- Participation in the monthly Land Management Section (LMS) meetings.
- Attendance of the Conservation and Community Directorate Management Team meetings.
- Amendment/sign-off of relevant press releases.

Programme overview/current focus

The priority in the wildlife area has been the finalisation of the Nature Recovery Plan and planning, through the Biodiversity Forum, for its implementation. Subsequent to the endorsement of the plan by the Authority in September 2023 and its web publication, a useful hard copy Executive Summary was made available in March 2024. The quantified objectives in the plan do not appear to be inconsistent with the Government’s Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework published in January 2024, though Natural England are still to issue guidance on how nationally-set targets on habitat creation, tree cover and peatland restoration are to be apportioned between the protected landscapes.

Sub-groups of the Forum are determining the monitoring regime for species that need bespoke conservation action and the approach to implementing the habitat improvement elements of the plan. Officers are working on improving the usefulness of the past 12 years of habitat survey data which will provide a baseline for this work.

Officers are working closely with our host unitary and combined authorities who are accountable for establishing Local Nature Recovery Strategies by March 2025 and it is anticipated that our plan will be incorporated faithfully into these strategies.

Regarding our Management Plan objective to work with others, under Natural England's lead, to end illegal persecution of raptors, whilst it is encouraging that 15 hen harrier nesting attempts across the Yorkshire Dales and Nidderdale were recorded in 2023 it very dispiriting to note that were six confirmed persecution incidents recorded in the Yorkshire Dales National Park in 2022 (latest data). Additionally, Natural England report 11 tagged hen harriers as 'missing fate unknown' across the area in 2022 and 2023. The current partnership approach has proven ineffective in tackling this issue.

Given the continuing decline of nature in YDNP, as reflected in the poor performance of wildlife objectives in the National Park Management Plan, and the encouraging support for nature in our public consultation on the new Management Plan priorities, we have the ideal opportunity in developing the new Management Plan to embed the objectives of the Nature Recovery Plan.

In the farming sector, where much depends on the emerging Environmental Land Management Schemes, there has been recent significant improvement in payments available for upland farming and in the application process. Our officers are continuing to do a great job in helping farmers and land managers to navigate through this challenging transition. Work and advice on Catchment Sensitive Farming has progressed well. Feedback from farmers on the advice they are receiving from the Authority continues to be very positive.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has been a great success since its inception in 2021 and is due to close in March 2025, though DEFRA are reviewing this. Over 200 agreements to date have been made, with grant availability of £1.5 million in 2023/24 and £2.5 million in 2024/25 covering projects across the Management Plan on habitats and land management, historic environment, access, education and outreach, economy and tourism. Around £150k of underspend has occurred in the past year due to staff constraints and farmer withdrawals.

Regarding farming's major contribution to greenhouse gas emissions in the NP I hope that we are able to establish a pragmatic pathway to reduction in the new Management Plan.

Regarding Woodlands, our team are directly responsible for delivery of the Grow Back Greener (Woodland Trust) programme, initiated in 2021, where we oversaw planting of 47 ha in 2023 (target 62 ha) with over 80 ha planned in 2024. Planting constraints, including wading bird protection and landowner withdrawals, has impacted delivery. YDNPA is responsible for a total of 240 ha planting by 2025. We also delivered a further 9.1 ha through other schemes including the White Rose Forest. In addition to this direct delivery,

we assisted partners in the planting of a further 244 ha in 2023. The team continues to process around 200 consultations per year on new woodland schemes.

There has been a significant increase in applications regarding protected trees work this year

There has been quite a turnover of staff within the team in the past 12 months and the hope is that some stability can now be maintained. In common with other teams, the nature of the short-term contracts that we are able to offer are not conducive to strong staff retention.

It was disappointing that the potential woodland creation project based on private finance did not progress but an alternative multiple-investor approach is now being pursued.

Having overseen the update of the Dales Woodland Strategy in 2021, with the ambition to establish 600 ha of woodland each year until 2040, the Dales Woodland Forum has not been particularly active and has struggled to effectively track the pipeline of potential planting projects to calibrate the likelihood of meeting our ambition. It would benefit from a re-boot under a new chair.

I would like to thank all members of the Land Management Section for being supportive of me in the role.

Mark Corner