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 26 November 2024 at 10:30am.

Members Present:

Lizzie Bushby, Mark Corner, Robert Heseltine, David Ireton, Allen Kirkbride, Andrew Murday, Yvonne Peacock, Steve Shaw Wright, Graham Simpkins.

Copies of all documents considered are in the minute book

The Chair welcomed Rob Jones (External Auditor, Ernst & Young LLP) and Gavin Barker (External Auditor, Forvis Mazars LLP). Gaurav Ghandi (External auditor Forvis Mazars LLP) joined the meeting via Teams.

20/24 Apologies

Apologies were received from Ian Mitchell.

21/24 Minutes

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2024, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

22/24 Public Questions/Statements

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

23/24 Declarations of Lobbying

No declarations of lobbying were made at the meeting.

24/24 Performance Review of Delegated Statutory Highways Duties

Considered the report of the Director Park Services.

Discussion included the following:

- Query relating to the Coast to Coast funding - does that contribute to the Public Rights of Way (PROW) generally. The Director of Park Services explained that the Coast to Coast was additional funding from Natural England and did not subsidise or support any other areas of PROW work.

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- The Member Champion for Recreation Management thanked the Review Group for their work, and pointed out that the ease of use figure for the network of PROW was significantly better than other National Parks nearby, and was good value for money

  Resolved – To approve the recommendations and approve the future actions and conclusion of the review (sections 4 and 5 of the Annex of the report)

25/24 Performance Review of Carbon Reduction Plan

Considered – the report of the Director of Corporate Services.

Discussion included the following:

- Query about the carbon benefits of planting trees on permanent pasture. The Director of Conservation and Community explained that permanent pasture is good for storing carbon – but unlike woodland or peatland it quickly reaches a point where it cannot sequester any more. Options like 'wood pasture' can do both.

- The fact that the Authority has made a huge amount of progress in reducing its emissions (down 74%) but the final reductions needed to meet our objective (95% reduction) will be the most difficult to achieve.

Resolved – To Approve the proposed future actions and conclusion of the review (sections 4 and 5 of the Annex).

26/24 Major Project Review of Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership

Considered and **Noted** the report and presentation of the Head of Park Services.

Resolved -To **Approve** the report.

27/24 Annual Governance Report

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

A Member queried the issue of Financial Sustainability in Appendix C in relation to the continuation (or not) of the uplift of £500K from Defra. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that there was still no clarity about the likely financial settlement. An update would be included as part of the draft budget for the Finance and Resources Committee in February.

Resolved – To **approve** minor changes to the Local Code of Corporate Governance - Appendix A in the report.

28/24 Annual Risk Management Review

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

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Members attention was drawn to the slight change in the wording on **Appendix 1** Item 5 – from 'Loss of key staff' to 'Inadequate staff resources. Item 6 Health and Safety and 'Wellbeing 'was added. Item 8 'Loss of IT Systems and Records' was changed to Business Continuity'. The Director of Corporate Services assured Members that the risk levels would remain the same.

Resolved – To **approve** the Strategic Risk Register in **Appendix 1**. The review and future reports on Strategic Risk Register would identify any risks where significant changes in trend (i.e. where risk is rising/falling).

29/24 Corporate Plan 2024/25 – 6-month progress report

Considered and **noted** the report of the Deputy Chief Executive.

Members discussed the issues surrounding water quality within the National Park.
The Chief Executive will be raising this at a scheduled meeting with Yorkshire Water.

Resolved – To **approve** the report**.**

30/24 Local Audit Backlog – Rebuilding Assurance

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

Resolved – To note the report from the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) which details the approach auditors will take over the coming years to get auditing regimes back on track.

31/24 External Auditors' Report on 2022/23

Considered the report of the Head of Finance and the External Auditors report from Ernst & Young LLP.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

32/24 Audit Strategy Memorandum 2023/24

Considered and **noted** the report of the external auditor Forvis Mazars LLP.

Members raised concerns over the amount of time it may take to reach the point where the auditors have the capacity to provide anything more than a 'disclaimed' audit. The external auditor suggested it may take a year or two to reach this, and there was no guarantee.

33/34 Customer Service Excellence Award

Considered and **noted** the report of the Head of Human Resources

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

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