Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 5**

16 December 2025

National Park Authority Objectives for 2026/27

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval from Members for a new draft set of Authority objectives for 2026/27.

Recommendation

2. That Members approve the draft objectives set out in the Annex as the basis for planning the Authority's work and resources for 2026/27 onwards.

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 28:**
    Plan and manage the Authority's work so as to make the most effective use of its resources, including generating sufficient income to maintain expenditure at the same level as 2014/15 in real terms across the extended National Park area.

Background

4. The Authority's priorities for 2026/27 were agreed at the September 2025 National Park Authority meeting. The next stage of the corporate planning cycle is to agree the objectives that we will aim to achieve over the next three years through our various work programmes. These form the basis for setting the budget for 2026/27 and beyond.

5. Members will be aware that Authority's objectives are due for a complete overhaul. This year's Corporate Plan contained objectives that could no longer be achieved whilst newer areas of work (e.g. regenerative farming) were not reflected.

6. Most significantly, a new National Park Management Plan (NPMP) 2025-2030 was adopted in June. This sets out some 40 objectives that the Authority and over 80 other organisations have committed to. The next Corporate Plan is, therefore, the opportunity for the Authority to start to set out what it intends to do to contribute towards the achievement of those objectives.

Authority objectives for 2026/27

7. The **Annex** lists the proposed new Corporate Plan objectives. As in the current Corporate Plan, the objectives are grouped under the six ambitions from the NPMP (with a separate additional section relating to the corporate effectiveness of the organisation).

8. The Authority is likely to have at least some small role in all 40 of the NPMP objectives. However, it is not practical to include them all, nor sensible to imply that the Authority is responsible for them all. Rather, it is proposed that our Corporate Plan focuses on those objectives where the Authority has a significant role to play – either as the lead or a supporting body – and where we will be undertaking a programme activity (as opposed to occasional or one-off supporting actions). That does not mean that the Authority will be doing nothing to support the other objectives – just that they can be picked up by relevant actions in our Action Plan each year.

9. The key things for Members to note include:
    a. 27 objectives are taken from the new National Park Management Plan. Where appropriate, these have been amended to set out the Authority's specific contribution (reflecting the fact that many other bodies will be contributing to them too).
    b. The scope of the objectives, and the scale of the commitments in each case, take account of the priorities set by Members in 2024, and re-confirmed in September
    c. There are 4 objectives relating to land management (1, 5, 6, 18) where the scale of Authority activity is almost impossible to predict at this stage because it will be dependent on decisions by Defra on future funding and the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.
    d. A new general objective on sustainable development has been included (objective 28). It is intended that this will be the hook for wider activity by the Authority to support the NPMP objectives relating to climate, economy and communities.
    e. 7 objectives have been included that relate to the operational or organisational effectiveness of the Authority, including a new objective for communications.

10. Just over half of the proposed objectives (19) are slight variations on existing ones — marked as 'retained' or 'retained (amended)'. There are 11 new objectives (marked 'added') – all but two are taken from the NPMP. The total number of objectives (36) is an increase of three on the current Corporate Plan.

11. Notwithstanding the specific difficulties identified in para 9c. above, the objectives are our best estimate of what can be achieved based on what we currently believe the financial settlement might look like. Once the settlement is confirmed, it may well be necessary to revise some objectives. Depending on timing, this could be done as part of the budget papers for the Finance and Resource Committee in February or the full Authority in March.

Next steps

12. Subject to Members' decision today:
    a. the objectives will be incorporated into a draft budget for 2026/27 for the Finance and Resources Committee to consider in February;
    b. the Corporate Plan for 2026/27 will be published after the final budget is approved by the Authority in March.

Financial Implications

13. As has become the norm in recent years, the Authority is having to set objectives without knowing the scale of the resources it will have to achieve them, nor the extent to which Government intends to steer how those resources are deployed. The objectives provide a good indication of where we expect to direct the Authority's resources in 2026/27 but final decisions on expenditure will be taken as part of setting the Authority's budget in March.

Legal Implications

14. None.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

15. The proposals include a number of objectives that will support and increase equality, diversity and inclusion within the National Park. All the objectives in the National Park Management Plan were subject to an Equality Impact Assessment, which was published in January.

Climate Change Implications

16. The proposals include a number of objectives that will contribute directly to mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change across the National Park, as well as continuing work to reduce the Authority's own operational emissions by 95% by 2030.

Conclusion

17. Setting meaningful objectives is a critical part of the Authority's corporate management. The adoption of a new National Park Management Plan in 2025 has necessitated a comprehensive refresh of the Authority's own objectives, to take account of both the new Management Plan and our best estimate of the Authority's financial position in 2026/27.

Gary Smith - Deputy Chief Executive

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Annex

Home to the finest variety of wildlife in England

Proposed new objectives	Notes
1. Support farmers and landowners to restore or create 500 hectares of new wildlife-rich habitats outside protected sites by 2030 (from a 2022 baseline).	Replaced
2. Support farmers and landowners to restore and manage landscape-scale mosaics of semi-natural habitats in one 'nature recovery area' ('Tees-Swale') and develop similar initiatives for at least 2 additional areas by 2030.	Retained (amended)
3. Work with farmers, landowners to improve the condition of rivers – including significantly reducing diffuse pollution from farming through the Catchment Sensitive Farming programme.	Retained (amended)
4. Ensure that recovery plans are in place and being implemented for all 'priority wildlife species' by 2030.	Added

Resilient and responsive to the impacts of climate change, storing more carbon each year than it produces

Proposed new objectives	Notes
5. Work with farmers and landowners to encourage creation of 600 ha of native broadleaf and mixed woodland, including, scrub, wood pasture and natural regeneration by 2031, to create a network that increases resilience to climate change and reduce downstream flood peaks.	Retained (amended)
6. Work with farmers and landowners to support food production through the use of regenerative farming practices, working with natural processes, across at least 40 farm holdings (c6,000 ha) by 2028.	Added

A friendly open and welcoming place with outstanding opportunities to enjoy its special qualities

Proposed new objectives	Notes
7. Manage and maintain the standard of all public rights of way, so that, on average, 90% remain 'easy to use'	Retained
8. Create 5 new 'miles without stiles' routes that are suitable for a diverse range of ages and abilities.	Replaced

Proposed new objectives	Notes
9. By 2030 work with 150 community groups to co-design activity days, support and training to help people from under-served communities to experience the special qualities of the Yorkshire Dales National Park more easily.	Replaced
10. Provide curriculum-based outdoor learning and skills-based activities to enable 3,000 young people from in and around the National Park to explore and take action to enhance their environment each year and embed youth participation in the work of the Authority and the National Park Management Plan Partnership.	Retained (amended)
11. Give people from all backgrounds an opportunity to enjoy and contribute to looking after the National Park by providing at least 5,000 volunteer days per year, with at least 20% coming from under-served communities by 2029.	Retained (amended)
12. Enhance at least five 'green lanes' by 2030 and manage use by recreational motor vehicles and motorcycles - encouraging and supporting responsible use.	Retained (amended)
13. Manage and promote the Pennine Way, Pennine Bridleway and Coast-to-Coast National Trails and other established long-distance routes and improve linkages from the Coast-to-Coast route to 5 nearby settlements by 2030.	Retained (amended)
14. Help to tackle health inequalities and improve people's health and well-being by enabling at least 1,500 people with health conditions to connect with and experience the special qualities of the National Park through 'social prescribing' activities by 2030.	Added

A distinctive living, working cultural landscape that tells the story of generations of people interacting with their environment

Proposed new objectives	Notes
15. Maintain the National Park as a place where a true sense of tranquillity and remoteness can still be found, including taking action to retain international 'Dark Sky Reserve' status.	Retained
16. Support farmers and landowners to conserve and enhance the distinctive landscape of field barns and drystone walls, so that at least one of the Barns and Walls Conservation Areas (Swaledale & Arkengarthdale and Littondale) is no longer at risk.	Replaced

17. Help local people to record, restore, repair and – where possible - bring back into use historical sites, buildings and features.	Retained (amended)
18. Support farmers and landowners to enhance the Dales' landscape, and support nature, climate and farming resilience, including planting field trees to mitigate the impact of ash dieback on tree cover outside woodlands, and creating or restoring 20 km of hedgerows by 2028 (from 2022 baseline).	Added

Providing an outstanding range of benefits for the nation based on its natural resources, landscape and cultural heritage, which underpin a flourishing local economy

Proposed new objectives	Notes
19. Provide an efficient development management service that supports appropriate opportunities for economic and community development whilst helping to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park, including ensuring that 65% of minor and 80% of 'other' planning applications are being determined within eight weeks and at least 80% of applicants are satisfied with the service provided.	Retained
20. Develop and promote events and attractions based on the special qualities of the National Park that will be attractive to a new, more diverse and younger audience, so that 15% of visitors each year are coming for the first time.	Retained (amended)
21. Improve the quality, sustainability and accessibility of the tourism 'offer' and information to encourage visitors to stay overnight, come 'out of season', and experience parts of the National Park that are currently less visited, so that the value of tourism grows by at least 5% in real terms by 2030.	Replaced
22. Establish an integrated National Park farm advisory service to: support regenerative farming; increase take-up of national agri-environment schemes and green finance opportunities; and so, support the viability and retention of low input livestock farming across the National Park.	Added
23. By 2030 provide at least 15 apprenticeships or traineeships, and wider programmes of training in land management, heritage and green skills, including the new skills needed by businesses to support more nature-friendly farming and tackle climate change.	Added

Proposed new objectives	Notes
24. Make the National Park more accessible to a diverse range of ages and abilities, including by providing 4 locations that all have 'Changing Places' accessible toilet facilities, all terrain mobility scooters, and 'miles without stiles' routes.	Added
25. Encourage and support farms and estates to provide more opportunities for visitors and schools groups to experience the special qualities of the National Park, including establishing a 'peer mentoring' network to help build capacity by 2029	Added

Home to strong, self-reliant and balanced communities with good access to the services they need

Proposed new objectives	Notes
26. Grant sufficient planning permissions (around 75) each year to support the completion of 250 new dwellings by 2030, of which at least half will be social housing, affordable or local occupancy homes to attract and retain younger working age households.	Retained (amended)
27. Increase the proportion of dwellings that are permanently occupied by requiring all new dwellings to be for principal occupancy.	Added
28. Support programmes of activity by other bodies to encourage sustainable development within the National Park, including initiatives that improve access to services, support green jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.	Added
29. Develop and contribute to relevant local plans and projects to improve connections for walking, cycling, wheeling and horse-riding and create at least two new multi-use routes by 2030, including one linking Garsdale–Hawes.	Replaced

To be a highly effective organisation that delivers quality services and is widely recognised for its expertise in National Park policy, practice and partnership-working

Proposed new objectives	Notes
30. Plan and manage the Authority's work to make the most effective use of its resources, including generating sufficient income to maintain expenditure at the same level as 2014/15 in real terms.	Retained
31. Provide high quality, efficient and effective services to the public and other stakeholders, achieving substantial assurance through an annual Customer Service audit.	Retained (amended)
32. Operate governance arrangements that are fit for purpose, as reported through the Annual Governance Statement and Report.	Retained
33. Ensure that we have HR policies, procedures, terms and conditions to attract and support the right people with the right skills, core values and behaviours to deliver the Authority's work effectively, as evidenced by accreditation under the Investors in People standard.	Retained
34. Provide facilities and IT systems that are fit for purpose and support the effective delivery of our services and high standards of health, safety and well-being.	Retained
35. By 2030, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our operations by at least 95% compared to 2005/06	Retained (amended)
36. Provide high quality, engaging communications to audiences in a variety of formats, including generating 2 million web views a year.	Added

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