YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY **ITEM 6**

Committee: **AUDIT AND REVIEW**
Date: **18 April 2023**

Report: **PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT**

Purpose of the report

1. To consider the findings of the review of the performance of the Authority's Development Management service.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That Members note the findings of the review, and approve the recommendations for future action set out in paragraph 23 of the attached report.

Strategic Planning Framework

3. The information and recommendations contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

   Corporate Plan objectives
   31. Provide high quality, efficient and effective services and communications to the public and other stakeholders, and so maintain the Customer Service Excellence standard every year.

Background

4. The Committee determined in April 2021 to carry out a performance review of the Development Management service. The review was prompted by the introduction of a new planning software system (Agile), which would have a significant impact on the way that the service was delivered.

5. Work on the review was initially delayed by both sustained workload pressure on the service in 2021/22, and ongoing issues with the Agile planning software, which meant that it could not yet be fully used in the way intended. In April 2022, the Committee agreed that the review would take place this year.

6. The Review has been led by the Member Champion for Development Management (Jim Munday) and a Member from this Committee (Yvonne Peacock). The other members of the review team are: Gary Smith (Director of Conservation and

Community); Richard Graham (Head of Development Management); Michelle Clyde (Head of Finance) and Josie Wilson (PA to Director of Conservation and Community).

7. The Review Team began work in June 2022, and an interim report on progress with the review came to the Committee in November.

Consideration

8. The review team's report is **attached**.

9. Overall, the review concluded that – despite the protracted difficulties with the implementation of the Agile software – the service is performing well; both in relation to achieving the objectives that the Authority has set, and in comparison to other National Park Authorities.

10. In seeking to develop the service further, the review team identified two broad issues:
    a. the Authority's service was relatively expensive in comparison to the costs/performance of other National Park Authorities. This has been resolved during the course of the review (see para 17 of the report);
    b. whilst the Authority performs very well on the number of applications determined within 8 weeks or agreed extension of time (the national performance measure), it is behind the other Authorities in terms of the number actually determined within 8 weeks. This is partly a reflection of the nature of the applications and use of s106 agreements but there are steps that the Authority could take to improve performance – both in terms of its internal processes and its communication with agents, applicants and parish councils to make the system work more efficiently.

11. The group has identified a number of improvements that have already been put into practice (see para 20 of the report). Recommendations for further action are set out in para. 23. None of these will require significant resources. Subject to Members approval, they will be included in the Authority Action Plan for 2023/24, which will be considered by the Finance and Resources Committee in May.

Conclusion

12. The Authority already provides a very good Development Management Service – meeting our objectives and performing well in comparison to other NPAs. The implementation of the recommendations from this review should ensure we continue to provide a service that is both cost-effective and efficient.

Gary Smith
Director of Conservation & Community

31 March 2023

PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF THE AUTHORITY'S DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE

THE ISSUES

What are the specific performance issues that the review has been set up to tackle?

1. The review was set up to look at the effectiveness of the Authority's Development Management Service. In particular, the review was initiated because the introduction of the new planning software system (Agile) would have an impact on the way that the service is delivered.

2. The detailed scope of the Review, as agreed by the Review Team, is set out in **Annex A**. Development Management was defined as all aspects of dealing with planning applications (including legal and other specialist advice) other than the role of the Planning Committee, which was reviewed separately by this Committee in 2021.

Why do the issues matter?

3. Development Management is a statutory function of the Authority's role as Local Planning Authority. It is one of the Authority's five current priority programmes, and has been a priority for the last 8 years. Good Development Management is fundamental to the achievement of many of the objectives set out in the National Park Management, including: the retention of Dark Skies, promoting positive landscape change; the restoration and re-use of traditional buildings; supporting new housing; improving broadband and mobile coverage; and opportunities for economic growth.

4. The Authority expects to provide a high-level of service, with applications dealt with in a timely and proportionate manner, and with a positive approach taken to securing permissions for development that will contribute to sustainable development.

5. At the start of 2022/23, the core Development Management Service employed 15 FTE (c12% of the Authority's staff) and accounted for 10% of the planned net expenditure for the year[1]. A further 3 FTE of staff time is estimated to be provided by other specialist officers to support the provision of the service (Legal, Wildlife, Trees, Heritage etc). The Authority's core grant is worth less than half of what it was in 2010, and further real-terms cuts are due for the next 3 years. So, alongside the provision of a high-quality service, there is an obvious imperative to seek to ensure that the service is being delivered as cost-effectively as possible.

[1] Based on agreed budget for 2022-23

CURRENT PERFORMANCE

How is the service currently being delivered?

6. The Service is provided in-house. Two teams of planning officers cover the north and south of the National Park respectively, and are supported by a core team of planning technicians. The vast majority of the other specialist advice that is needed to inform decision-making is also provided in-house. However, in recent years, the Authority has regularly used consultants to cover *ad hoc* planning officer vacancies because of wider recruitment difficulties across the sector.

7. The way in which staff operate on a day-to-day basis has changed significantly in the last 3 years, as a result of:

    - The introduction of the Agile planning software system. There have been a number of issues with the installation of the system, and at the time this review started some key elements had still not been implemented;
    - The impacts of Covid, and more latterly the move to 'blended working' arrangements being introduced for some staff. As a result, managers and planning officers now spend a significant proportion of time working remotely.

What are we *supposed* to be achieving (i.e. current objectives, targets etc?)

8. The objective for the Development Management Service is to:

    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[2] and at least 80% of applicants are satisfied with the service provided.

What are we *actually* achieving?

9. In the most recent year for which full figures are available (2021-22), the Authority out-performed on all 3 elements of the objective:

    - 82% of 'minor' applications were dealt with within target times;
    - 89% of 'other' applications were dealt with within target times;
    - 88% of applicants were satisfied with the service.

10. A wider set of performance information for the previous 5 years is set out in **Annex B**. The outcomes being achieved through the service are summarised in **Annex C**.

[2] In line with Government targets, "within 8 weeks" means within 8 weeks or an agreed extension of time.

THE EVALUATION

How much is the service costing?

11. The original budget for the Development Management service at the start of 2022-23 was:

		£
Staff	**Expenditure**	**590,000**
IT Maintenance	Expenditure	15,500
Admin, Training & Consultancy	Expenditure	20,000
Applications	Expenditure	23,000
	Income	(225,000)
Pre-Application Advice Service	Income	(25,000)
Programme	**Expenditure**	**58,500**
	Income	**(250,000)**
Net Total (including staff)		**408,500**

12. This figure was further refined during the course of the review in order to enable meaningful comparison with other National Park Authorities (see below).

How do current performance and costs compare to other bodies?

13. The Review Team determined at the outset that the most meaningful comparisons would be with other National Park Authorities and, in particular, those NPAs that deal with a similar level of applications (Dartmoor; New Forest; North York Moors). A summary of comparative performance information for all the NPAs is contained in **Annex D**.

14. The data suggests that the Authority's performance is relatively strong on most aspects of performance compared to other NPAs. The Authority's performance has improved over the course of the last 5 years, and is broadly in the top quartile across all the performance measures.

15. The one area where the Authority's performance has been less strong is in terms of the number of non-major applications that are actually determined within 8 weeks (i.e. excluding applications where an extension of time has been agreed) – see **Annex E**. This can be explained in part by the fact that the Authority receives a higher proportion of 'minor' applications (e.g. new housing development) than the comparator NPAs. The Authority also relies on s106 legal agreements to retain some of the new housing for local occupancy. Such applications cannot ever be completed within 8 weeks – and account for around 8% of applications determined. However, even with allowance for these factors, as a priority programme, the Authority should be performing better on this metric.

16. In relation to costs, direct comparisons are difficult because every Authority has a different structure and different approaches to delivering aspects of its Development Management service. In seeking to make comparisons, the Review team again focused

on the three similar NPAs – comparing their costs with the Authority's original budget for 2022/23. Following the initial receipt of cost information further work was done to try to understand exactly how each Authority was providing its service so as to ensure that we were comparing like with like. These comparative costs – which have been rounded to the nearest £5,000 – are shown in **Annex F**.

17. The figures should be treated with some degree of caution because of the difficulty of making exact comparisons. Nonetheless, it is clear that – at the start of 2022/23 – the Authority's service was more expensive than comparative NPAs. This reflects both the proportionately higher staffing levels/costs, and proportionately lower income levels per application. Since then, however, a number of changes have been made to staffing levels:

    - Removal of a temporary additional planning officer post that had been introduced to deal with a backlog of applications;
    - Reduction in Planning Assistant posts from 2 fte to 1.4 FTE
    - Reduction in one Planning Officer post from 1 FTE to 0.86 FTE
    - Ending the Planning Apprentice post.

18. Cumulatively, the impact of those changes is to reduce staff costs by over £60,000 – bringing gross costs per application directly in line with the costs for the North York Moors and Dartmoor National Park Authorities (see **Annex F**)

Are the current objectives realistic given the current priority of the programme and any funding decisions already taken?

19. Development Management has been one of the Authority's priority programmes since 2016. The level of resources that have gone into the service, and the fact that the objective has been achieved every year, confirm that the current objective is realistic – notwithstanding the additional challenges arising from the impacts of Covid and the implementation of the Agile planning software system in the last 2 years.

What are the potential options for alternative ways of delivering the service to improve performance - given the current priority of the programme and any funding decisions already taken?

20. There are a number of ways in which the current approach to the service has already been improved during the course of this review. Measures already implemented include:

    - Reducing staff costs by over £50,000;
    - Continuing implementation of the Agile planning system, including the roll-out of tablet devices to facilitate more efficient remote working whilst on-site;
    - For applications requiring s106 agreements, providing applicants with a direct contact in the Authority's Legal team to speed up completion;
    - Updating the guidance on the Authority's website, including FAQs to help improve the quality and timeliness of applications and supporting information

21. Additional ways to improve performance are set out under ‘Future Action’ below.

Are there any other options (e.g. ending the service, reducing quality etc)?

22. The main alternatives for delivering the Development Management service are set out in **Annex G**, along with some brief notes. As Development Management is a priority programme for the Authority, the assessment concluded that there were no viable alternative options at this time. However,

FUTURE ACTION

23. Subject to Members’ views, the outcome of this review will be used by officers to implement a range of further measures to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of the Development Management service, including:

- Introduce a revised Development Management Charter (**Annex H**) setting out the standards of service that applicants can expect, including reductions in the time spent on negotiations so that more applications are determined within 8 weeks.
- Carry out a review of current validation arrangements to improve the proportion of applications that are valid on receipt, and the quality of the supporting documentation.
- Improve communication with local agents, including running occasional meetings with the aim of reducing invalid applications, promoting a better understanding of policy and decision-making.
- Explore opportunities for joint working with the new unitary authorities, once those bodies are fully established.
- Streamline internal consultation processes, and identify and implement further efficiencies in the use of Agile, and other internal processes, to increase the proportion of applications being determined within 8 weeks.
- Continue training events for Parish Councils, including one on use of the Citizens’ Portal.
- Extend and improve website guidance on the planning process and how to design policy-compliant development.
- As part of the new Local Plan, review design guidance and supplementary planning documents to ensure they provide advice that is accessible and addresses common issues raised in applications.
- Keep levels of planning fee income under review to ensure they are in line with other high-performing authorities.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT: SCOPING

Strategic and financial context

- current state of planning nationally:
  - *increasing applications*
  - *staff shortages;*
  - *backlogs etc*;
- local strategic context:
  - *priority service – so quality matters;*
  - *Agile;*
  - *move to blended working;*
  - *increasing no of applications;*
  - *recruitment difficult*;
- financial position:
  - *decreasing real value of Authority's core grant, and increasing reliance on external funding;*
  - *Authority needs to make savings from 2023/24 onwards – so unlikely to be much scope to increase costs*.

Work areas to be included

- Development management includes all aspects of determining planning applications:
  - Pre-application advice;
  - Processing applications
  - Determining applications
  - Giving effect to decisions (including legal aspects like s106s, discharging conditions/approving minor amendments).
- Doesn't include:
  - Minerals;
  - Enforcement.
  - Land charge searches
  - Planning policy

Significant issues to cover

1. ***Communication with the public***
   - Via Agile – consultations, acknowledgements, the portal etc
   - Contact with officers – email, phone, in person

- Website
- Planning Surgeries
- Pre-app advice – what we provide (time, cost, effectiveness)
- % of valid applications (still under 50%)

2. Implementation of Agile

- How is it working now, what still needs fixing/improving?
- Where could processes be streamlined/improved further?
- How have job roles changed, and do we have the right number/type of posts?
- Recruitment options

3. Overview of Service (inputs and outputs)

- Members expectations of the level of service;
- Performance on objectives/key measures;
- Resources and costs – staff, admin, income;
- Performance on key indicators, benchmarked against selected other NPAs and LPAs

Annex B

YDNPA DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE: 5-YEAR PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Total	Average
No. of planning applications received	697	692	656	695	717	3,457	691
No. of planning applications:							
determined	531	593	567	482	561	2,734	547
withdrawn	69	63	45	60	84	321	64
other closures	4	4	3		2	13	3
% of applications approved	94%	91%	90%	93%	92%		92%
% of decisions:							
delegated	92%	92%	89%	87%	96%		91%
by Committee	8%	8%	11%	13%	4%		9%
No. of technical/prior approval applications received	38	72	43	63	42	258	52
No. of applications to discharge conditions received	126	120	146	114	97	603	121
No. of non-material amendment applications received	23	23	16	31	23	116	23
No. of pre-application enquiries completed.	378	330	316	312	325	1,661	332
No. of Appeals received	13	12	14	12	11	62	12
No. of Appeals:							
allowed	2	6	1	3	1	13	3
dismissed	2	5	16	12	4	39	8
allowed/dismissed (dual decision)	2	1	2	0	0	5	1
% of applications valid on receipt	40%	37%	39%	54%	48%		44%

Development Management

Facts and figures for 2021-22…

- 561 applications were determined (an increase of 16% on the previous year);
- 92% of applications were approved (down from 93% in 2020/21)
- The most significant application approved was for Station Road, Sedbergh – a site for 49 houses, including 34 affordable dwellings.
- 132 new dwellings were approved, compared to the annual target of 85. This is the highest figure since 2005/06.
- 52 permissions were granted for the conversion of barns and other traditional buildings to residential use, with 2 refusals (an approval rate of 96%)
- Over 90 new dwellings were built, compared to the NPMP objective of 67 – the highest figure since 2003.

...and current trends on key policies

- 368 new dwellings have now been approved since April 2018 (target = 340).
- 209 new dwellings have now been completed since April 2018, still some way behind the NPMP objective (268)
- There are still some 606 dwellings waiting to be built:
    - 472 from uncompleted planning permissions;
    - 134 on sites specifically allocated for housing in the Local Plan.
- Since March 2015, 282 barns and 190 other traditional buildings (472 in total) have been approved for conversion to residential uses under Local Plan policy L2.
- Over the same period, 17 applications have been refused - an approval rate of 96%.

National Park Family Indicators – 5 Year data

No. of applications received

2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
South Downs	2,790	South Downs	2,501	Lakes	1,130	South Downs	2,031	South Downs	2,481
Lakes	1,164	Lakes	1,189	Peak	745	Lakes	1,173	Lakes	1,379
Peak	1,110	Peak	1,175	**New Forest**	716	Peak	955	Peak	1,253
New Forest	821	**New Forest**	725	**Yorkshire Dales**	656	**New Forest**	820	**New Forest**	809
Moors	731	**Yorkshire Dales**	692	**Dartmoor**	620	**Yorkshire Dales**	695	**Yorkshire Dales**	717
Yorkshire Dales	697	**Dartmoor**	647	**Moors**	550	**Moors**	611	**Dartmoor**	617
Dartmoor	583	**Moors**	557	Exmoor	270	**Dartmoor**	555	**Moors**	617
Broads	254	Broads	236	Broads	208	Exmoor	355	Exmoor	420
Exmoor	242	Exmoor	222	Northumberland	52	Broads	189	Broads	224
Northumberland	64	Northumberland	84	South Downs	0	Northumberland	101	Northumberland	99

% of all applications determined that have been approved

2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
Northumberland	97%	Northumberland	97%	Northumberland	98%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	97%
Exmoor	95%	Broads	95%	**Moors**	94%	Broads	95%	Broads	93%
Moors	95%	Lakes	95%	Lakes	92%	**Moors**	95%	**Yorkshire Dales**	92%
Yorkshire Dales	94%	**Moors**	95%	Broads	91%	**Yorkshire Dales**	93%	Lakes	92%
Lakes	94%	Exmoor	92%	**Yorkshire Dales**	90%	South Downs	93%	South Downs	92%
Broads	89%	**Yorkshire Dales**	91%	**Dartmoor**	87%	Exmoor	92%	**Dartmoor**	91%
Dartmoor	89%	South Downs	88%	Exmoor	84%	**New Forest**	90%	**New Forest**	91%
South Downs	87%	**Dartmoor**	87%	**New Forest**	n/a	**Dartmoor**	86%	Exmoor	90%
New Forest	84%	**New Forest**	83%	Peak	n/a	Lakes	86%	Peak	84%
Peak	67%	Peak	74%	South Downs	n/a	Peak	80%	**Moors**	80%

Major applications determined within 13 weeks

2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
Yorkshire Dales	100%	**Yorkshire Dales**	100%	Lakes	100%	**Yorkshire Dales**	100%	**Yorkshire Dales**	100%
Broads	100%	**New Forest**	100%	Northumberland	100%	Exmoor	100%	Exmoor	100%
New Forest	100%	Northumberland	100%	**Yorkshire Dales**	89%	**New Forest**	100%	**New Forest**	100%
Peak	100%	Lakes	88%	**Moors**	78%	Lakes	86%	Lakes	91%
Exmoor	90%	**Moors**	83%	Broads	33%	**Moors**	78%	South Downs	89%
South Downs	86%	South Downs	78%	**Dartmoor**	n/a	**Dartmoor**	50%	Peak	86%
Lakes	80%	Peak	72%	Exmoor	n/a	Broads	17%	**Moors**	73%
Moors	75%	Exmoor	50%	**New Forest**	n/a	Northumberland	n/a	Broads	43%
Dartmoor	n/a	Broads	20%	Peak	n/a	Peak	n/a	**Dartmoor**	n/a
Northumberland	n/a	**Dartmoor**	n/a	South Downs	n/a	South Downs	n/a	Northumberland	n/a

‘Minor’ applications determined within 8 weeks

2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
Northumberland	97%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%
Broads	96%	**New Forest**	92%	Lakes	82%	**New Forest**	95%	**New Forest**	85%
Exmoor	94%	Peak	92%	**Yorkshire Dales**	79%	Lakes	83%	**Yorkshire Dales**	82%
South Downs	87%	Exmoor	91%	**Moors**	79%	**Moors**	82%	South Downs	79%
New Forest	84%	**Yorkshire Dales**	81%	**Dartmoor**	67%	**Yorkshire Dales**	75%	**Moors**	75%
Lakes	82%	South Downs	80%	Exmoor	62%	Exmoor	74%	Exmoor	73%
Yorkshire Dales	80%	Lakes	79%	Broads	53%	Broads	53%	**Dartmoor**	61%
Moors	73%	**Moors**	77%	**New Forest**	0	**Dartmoor**	53%	Broads	58%
Dartmoor	67%	Broads	55%	Peak	0	Peak	0	Lakes	54%
Peak	64%	**Dartmoor**	55%	South Downs	0	South Downs	0	Peak	52%

‘Other’ applications determined within 8 weeks

2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%
Exmoor	93%	Peak	93%	**Yorkshire Dales**	91%	**New Forest**	95%	**New Forest**	91%
South Downs	93%	**Yorkshire Dales**	91%	Lakes	90%	Lakes	92%	**Yorkshire Dales**	89%
Broads	92%	**New Forest**	91%	**Moors**	83%	**Moors**	90%	**Moors**	82%
Lakes	92%	Lakes	88%	**Dartmoor**	73%	Exmoor	84%	South Downs	81%
Yorkshire Dales	91%	South Downs	87%	Broads	69%	**Yorkshire Dales**	82%	Exmoor	77%
New Forest	91%	Exmoor	83%	Exmoor	64%	**Dartmoor**	77%	**Dartmoor**	71%
Dartmoor	85%	**Dartmoor**	80%	**New Forest**	0	Broads	76%	Lakes	69%
Moors	82%	**Moors**	80%	Peak	0	Peak	0	Broads	67%
Peak	73%	Broads	71%	South Downs	0	South Downs	0	Peak	64%

Proportion of applicants satisfied with the service

2011/12		2013/14		2015/16		2017/18		2021/22	
Broads	100%	**Dartmoor**	89%	**North Y Moors**	93%	Northumberland	93%	Broads	91%
Dartmoor	90%	Exmoor	88%	Northumberland	91%	Exmoor	91%	**Yorkshire Dales**	88%
Exmoor	89%	**North Y Moors**	87%	**Yorkshire Dales**	89%	**North Y Moors**	90%	**New Forest**	84%
North Y Moors	87%	Broads	80%	**Dartmoor**	89%	**Yorkshire Dales**	88%	**North Y Moors**	79%
Northumberland	82%	**Yorkshire Dales**	80%	Lake District	88%	**New Forest**	84%	**Dartmoor**	78%
Yorkshire Dales	**81%**	**New Forest**	78%	Exmoor	86%	Broads	83%	Peak	75%
Lake District	76%	Northumberland	64%	Broads	80%	Peak	75%	South Downs	53%
New Forest	64%	Lake District	n/a	**New Forest**	79%	South Downs	69%	Exmoor	n/a
Peak	59%	Peak	n/a	Peak	77%	**Dartmoor**	n/a	Lake District	n/a
South Downs	n/a	South Downs	n/a	South Downs	n/a	Lake District	n/a	Northumberland	n/a

Planning authorities' performance - speed of non-major development decisions

England, October 2020 to September 2022

Local planning authority	Total non-major development decisions[1]	Total non-major development decisions within 8 weeks	*% within 8 weeks*
Northumberland National Park	88	72	82%
Dartmoor National Park	855	640	75%
New Forest National Park	1,329	886	67%
Broads Authority	345	225	65%
North York Moors National Park	989	638	65%
Lake District National Park	1,897	1,016	54%
England	717,676	359,611	50%
Yorkshire Dales National Park	**885**	**401**	**45%**
Exmoor National Park	377	147	39%
Peak District National Park	1,316	438	33%
South Downs National Park	3,480	1,068	31%

Development Management Costs Comparison @March 2022

National Park	Staff Costs	Admin Costs	Total Costs	Fee Income	Pre-App Income	Total income	Total Costs Net	Apps	Cost Per App	Income per App
Dartmoor	£435,000	£85,000	£520,000	£210,000	£10,000	£220,000	£300,000	617	£486	£357
North York Moors	£470,000	£45,000	£515,000	£205,000	£20,000	£225,000	£290,000	617	£470	£365
New Forest	£445,000	£30,000	£475,000	£330,000	£15,000	£345,000	£130,000	809	£161	£426
Yorkshire Dales	**£595,000**	**£60,000**	**£655,000**	**£235,000**	**£20,000**	**£255,000**	**£400,000**	**717**	**£558**	**£356**

Development Management Costs Comparison @March 2023

National Park	Staff Costs	Admin Costs	Total Costs	Fee Income	Pre-App Income	Total income	Total Costs Net	Apps	Cost Per App	Income per App
Yorkshire Dales	**£530,000**	**£60,000**	**£590,000**	**£235,000**	**£20,000**	**£260,000**	**£330,000**	**717**	**£467**	**£356**

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS FOR DELIVERING THE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE

Option 1	Stop providing a Development Management service	Not an option – legal requirement.
Option 2	Contract out the service (private sector)	At current rates, private sector would be likely to be much more expensive, without reducing quality (e.g. no. of site visits etc). Noted that South Downs NPA had started out with a 'contracted out' service but has been bringing the service in house now.
Option 3	Contract out the service (public sector)	Public sector currently undergoing huge transition, so not a practical option at the moment. Noted that – in the long term - the creation of new unitary councils will offer more potential for joint working/efficiencies. This might offer opportunities to reduce costs but any 'contracting out' would make it more difficult to control quality, and could create inconsistency between different parts of the NP.
Option 4	Reduce service quality and further reduce costs.	Costs have already been reduced significantly during the course of the review but only to a level compatible with retaining service quality. Further cuts to quality would be incompatible with the priority attached to the service, and the expectations of Members.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT CHARTER

Introduction

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority is the local planning authority for the whole of the National Park.

This Charter explains what you can normally expect from our Development Management Service.

Our aim is to deliver a positive and proactive approach to delivering sustainable development. We focus on getting good new development and not just preventing the worst forms of new development. We do this by working in partnership with developers, residents, parish councils and statutory bodies.

We must comply with rules set out in legislation and in Government guidance for how the planning application process is managed. We must also meet Government performance targets for the speed and quality of decision making and also our statutory purpose to conserve the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.

Pre-application advice

The Authority provides pre-application planning advice in two ways. Formal written advice is provided for larger forms of development and free verbal advice is available to residents and local businesses by making an appointment at one of our Planning Surgeries. Details can be found using this link:

https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/planning/planning-advice-service/

For written advice we aim to provide a professional opinion on the issues raised by your proposal together with advice on how problematic issues can be resolved. For written advice without a site visit (Service A) we aim to provide a response within **15 working days** and for advice with a site visit (Service B) within **20 working days**.

How we deal with planning applications

How long will it take?

We aim to determine non-major planning applications within 8 weeks and proposals for major and EIA development within 13 and 16 weeks respectively which are the ‘statutory periods’ set by Government for dealing with applications. The Authority must report its performance against these targets to Government and will be sanctioned if it fails to meet them.

Extensions to these time limits can be agreed between the Authority and the applicant where it would support constructive negotiations. We will offer an extension of time agreement where we consider there is a realistic prospect of the application being concluded positively.

Normally this will amount to a period of one to two weeks but in the case of applications requiring a Section 106 legal agreement the period will be longer.

In the majority of cases, if it has not been possible to resolve significant issues raised by the proposal within the statutory time period the application is likely to be refused.

If it is clear at the outset that the proposal is unlikely to be supported, then we will determine the application as soon as statutory consultation processes have been carried out or give you the option of withdrawing the application.

Validation

The first stage in the planning application process is the **validation** stage. This is when the application is checked to ensure that we have all of the forms, plans, fee and supporting information that we need to deal with your application. Some information (eg. forms, plans and fee) is required by law and some is needed by the people we consult.

If the application is not accompanied by the necessary information it is likely to take longer to determine and may be refused.

Within **5 working days** of receiving your application we aim to either:

- Send an acknowledgement confirming that the application has been checked and found to be valid. We will also tell you the name and contact details of the officer who is dealing with the application (the case officer) and provide you with a site notice for you to display on the site, or;
- Contact you to explain why it is not valid and what needs to be done to allow the application to be validated.

Planning application forms and guidance on how to complete them are available online via the Planning Portal: https://www.planningportal.co.uk/
or from the Authority's website; https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/planning/applying-for-planning-permission/

If you have any queries about completing the forms, application fees, or what information to submit, you can contact our Technician Team on 01969 652345.

Consultation

The Authority must comply with legal requirements to publicise and consult on planning applications. Each application is checked to determine whether there are statutory bodies that need to be consulted (eg. the highway authority, the Environment Agency) or other experts or organizations that we need to advise us on the proposal.

Within **3 working days** of confirming the application is valid we aim to:

- put the application on our website;
- send it to all the 'statutory' bodies that we have to consult;

- write to neighbours to notify them of the application and send a copy of the application to the Parish Council for it to comment.

Assessing the proposal
The statutory consultees, the Parish Council and neighbours are given 21 days to submit comments on a planning application. During that time the Case Officer will visit the site however detailed consideration of the application can only really start once the 21-day consultation period is over.

You can track the progress of your application and read comments made by consultees and neighbours on our Citizen Portal:

https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/planning/view-planning-applications/

After **4 weeks** of submitting your valid application the Case Officer will be able to:

- update you on the consultation responses that we have received, and;
- give an initial view of any issues raised by the proposal;
- tell you whether the proposal is likely to be dealt with by officers using 'delegated powers' or has to be considered by the Planning Committee (and, if the latter, the likely date of the meeting); and
- whether the application is likely to be supported or not.

The majority (about 90%) of planning applications are approved. However, some applications can only be approved once some changes have been made to them. We will contact you if there are issues that can be easily resolved by submitting amended plans. If there are significant issues that cannot be resolved speedily the Case Officer will recommend that you withdraw your application and reconsider the proposals.

If your application is retrospective (development has already occurred) and there are significant issues with the proposal, we may not negotiate amendments but decide to refuse permission without further discussion.

Our aim is to decide applications within the statutory timescales and we will not prolong applications for protracted negotiations and repeated amendments.

If significant changes are made to a proposal, the views of consultees on the amended plans may need to be sought, and further time allowed for this.

Making the decision
The Authority deals with around 700 planning applications a year and the majority of these are delegated to Planning Officers to decide. Only the larger or less straightforward applications are decided by the Planning Committee.

If your application needs to be decided by the Planning Committee we will write to you at least **5 working days** before the meeting to confirm that your application has been placed on the Committee agenda, provide you with a copy of the Case Officer's report and give you details of the procedure for speaking at the meeting, including the deadline for making comments ('late representations') on the report.

Once a decision has been made you will receive a decision notice – either a grant of planning permission or a refusal.

A planning permission will be subject to a list of conditions. These are the terms on which the permission is granted. We will endeavour to keep them to a minimum and if there are likely to be conditions that will need to be discharged before construction starts we will agree them with you before the decision is issued.

We aim to deal with applications to discharge conditions as quickly as possible and within the statutory period of 8 weeks.

In some cases, planning permission may need to be subject to a Section 106 agreement (see S.106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990). This a legal agreement made between the person making the planning application and the Authority. It will normally relate to the occupancy of houses (so they are available for local people), securing affordable housing or property or financial matters. A Section 106 agreement will take some time to be concluded as it will require Solicitors to agree the drafting and can involve other parties, such as mortgage lenders.

Applications requiring a Section 106 agreement will need to have an extension of time agreed to allow time for the Authority's Solicitor to draft the agreement and for your Solicitor to provide title deeds and sign the agreement.

Appeals

If your application is refused permission, you have the option of submitting an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate:
https://www.gov.uk/topic/planning-development/planning-permission-appeals

Alternatively, you can have a re-think and seek pre-application advice on a revised proposal that addresses the reasons for refusal. We will continue to work positively with you if we think we can see a solution.