YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY **ITEM 7**

Date: **26 September 2023**

Report: **THE PRIORITISATION OF NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY WORK PROGRAMMES FOR 2023/24**

Purpose of the report

1. To seek confirmation of the Authority's priorities for 2023/24, as the basis for setting the Authority's objectives and developing the draft budget.

RECOMMENDATION

2. It is recommended that Members confirm the continuation of the prioritised list of programmes that was agreed in September 2021.

Strategic Planning Framework

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

   Corporate Plan objectives
   30. *Plan and manage all aspects of the Authority's business so as to make the most effective use of our resources*.

Background

4. A robust system of prioritising the Authority's work programmes is a fundamental part of our business planning. Identifying the areas of work that are most important to us ensures that staff, partners and stakeholders are clear about where we will direct our efforts, and helps guide the allocation of resources through the budget-setting process.

5. A fundamental review of priorities is carried out every 3 years. The most recent review was carried out in 2021 and set the direction for the way in which the Authority's resources would be deployed for the following 3 years (2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25). The next fundamental review is scheduled to take place at about this time next year.

6. Between the three-yearly fundamental reviews, we undertake an annual 'light touch' review. This simply involves identifying things that:

   a. have changed since Members made their last decision on priorities: and,

b. have changed *so significantly* that officers believe Members might want to reconsider the priority of one or more programmes as a result.

Reviewing the priority of the Authority's programmes

7. The current agreed priorities are set out in the **Annex**.

8. As always, there have been numerous external changes over the last 12 months. The most relevant of those include:

    a. ***Climate change*** – the impacts of climate change are increasingly visible, with global records being broken seemingly every week. The primary source of emissions in the National Park is farming/land-use. Land Management is already a priority but the evidence might suggest that a higher priority should be given to woodland creation. However, as a large amount of external funding has already been secured for woodland creation this is probably unnecessary at the present time.

    b. ***Defra priorities*** – Although some time ago, Defra indicated its intention to adopt the Glover Review recommendations to attach increased priority to climate change, nature recovery and engagement/diversity in national parks, progress has been and remains painfully slow. However, regardless of the extent of Government's commitment, these issues were already part of National Park England's 4 priorities, which were taken fully into account in setting our current Authority priorities.

    c. ***National Park Management Plan*** – the start of the 5-yearly update of the Plan has been delayed pending the outcome of Defra decisions on some of recommendations from the Glover Review. It is now scheduled to be completed in 2024/25. This will require some additional, one-off, resources – particularly as it will now clash with the final, resource-intensive stages of producing the new Local Plan. However, the scale of the funding needed, and the short-term nature of the work, should not require any change in priority.

9. It is notable that many *expected* national policy changes have not occurred. Most of the recommendations from the Glover Review are seemingly 'in the long grass' – other than some new guidance on Management Plans, and the possible setting of some national targets for Protected Landscapes (for e.g. habitat restoration; woodland creation greenhouse gas emission reductions etc). It now seems unlikely there will be any radical change to the context in which Protected Landscapes operate until after the next Comprehensive Spending Review and/or the next General Election. Unless that picture changes radically over the next 12 months, any fundamental review of priorities may be best left until the outcome of both is known. This is a decision that can be taken by Members next year.

Conclusion

10. Over many years, Members have had to take difficult decisions about the priority of the Authority's various work programmes. That task has become more challenging in

recent years as the real value of the Government grant has fallen significantly since 2010. However, the setting of *consistent* priorities over 3 year periods has provided a clear framework for allocating our resources effectively, enabling the Authority to continue to perform well in those work areas that Members consider most important.

Gary Smith
Deputy Chief Executive

10 September 2023

CURRENT PRIORITISATION FOR 2023-24

'Priority' sub-programmes	
Farm Conservation	Recreation & Health
Planning	Rights of way
Planning Policy	Wildlife

'Adequate' sub-programmes	
Apprenticeships	Outreach
Archaeology	Recreation Management
Barns & Walls	Sustainable Development Fund
Dales Countryside Museum	Tourism
Dark Skies	Volunteering
Education	Woodlands
Enforcement	Youth Volunteering
NPMP/State of the Park	

'Limited' sub-programmes	
Building Conservation	Minerals
Car Parks	National Park Centres
Cycling Infrastructure	National Trails
Historic Environment Record	Public Transport
Landscape Features	Toilets

Note: sub-programmes are listed alphabetically within each category, and not in any ranked order.