Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 6**

30 September 2025

Statement on Youth Participation

Purpose of the Report

1. To agree an Authority statement on youth participation for the National Park Authority.

Recommendation

2. That the Authority agrees the draft statement at Annex A as the Authority's broad position on youth participation.

Strategic Planning Framework

3. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework. Specifically, the Authority's Corporate Plan 2025-2026 includes the following objectives:

   - By 2025 provide 6,000 people from under-represented groups with activity days that enable them to access the special qualities of the National Park, and increase their understanding, enjoyment, health and well-being.
   - Through educational and skills-based activities, inspire 1,500 young people from in and around the National Park to explore and enhance their environment each year.
   - Give people from all backgrounds an opportunity to enjoy and contribute to the National Park by providing at least 7,000 volunteer days per year, with 15% coming from under-represented groups.

Background

4. In December 2018, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority signed the EUROPARC Federation Youth Manifesto. Developed by young people the Manifesto aims to be a source of ideas and inspiration for decision makers in Protected Areas and rural communities to ensure the involvement and empowerment of young people, with the aim to create a vibrant future for them, for nature, and for rural areas. The Authority has committed to delivering various aspects of the manifesto across the four key areas, namely: empowerment, living, learning and working.

5. The new National Park Management Plan (2025 – 2030) contains 7 specific objectives addressing young people and which support these aims. Full detail of these objectives can be found in **Annex A.**

6. The Authority currently works with over 2000 young people each year to help deliver its purposes, with a range of different opportunities for young people to be involved, and pathways for progression. During 2024/25:

    - 71 young volunteers were involved in activity to conserve and enhance the National Park's beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, including supported volunteering programmes such as Up Skill Down Dale;

    - 2296 young people took part in opportunities to understand and enjoy the National Park with their schools and community groups;

    - 10 young people took part in activity specifically designed to enhance their health and wellbeing;

    - 12 young people had opportunity to develop skills and knowledge and experience and careers through apprenticeships, traineeships and work experience.

7. The Authority has also made progress in amplifying the voice of young people in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, work programmes and processes across the Authority's work. Examples include:

    - the appointment of co-opted youth members to the Authority's Finance and Resources committee;
    - supporting two youth representatives for the Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan Partnership;
    - the involvement of 9 'young drafters' on the expert panels developing the new Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan.

    Involvement of youth voice in such a way can be challenging, as we can be constrained by the Authority's governance structures and arrangements.

The Youth Participation Statement

8. Whilst its clear good progress has been made, there is still more work to do, and the launch of the new management plan period is a good opportunity to embed a renewed vision that outlines the Authority's commitment to youth participation and continued action to ensure its truly embedded within the culture and work of the organisation.

9. The draft statement at Annex A sets out outlining this vision and commitments for Young People over the next management plan period. It commits to youth involvement across all the Authority's work areas and Members are asked to collaboratively support this approach, holding themselves and the Authority to account to ensure that this work is embraced across the organisation and not siloed within specific teams.

Financial Implications

10. There are no immediate financial implications associated with adopting the Youth Participation Statement. However, supporting young people to achieve active participation and continued growth and development takes Authority staff time and resource. While current commitments can be delivered within existing budgets, further ambitions may be supported through external funding applications.

Legal Implications

11. There are no legal implications associated with adopting the Youth Participation Statement

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

12. A draft Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared.

Climate Change Implications

13. There are no climate change implications associated with adopting the Youth Participation Statement

Consultation

14. The co-opted youth members of the Finance and Resources committee have been consulted in preparing this statement.

Conclusion

15. Setting out an Authority statement on youth participation will:

    a. Inform future development and delivery of approaches to youth engagement;
    b. Encourage collaborative working with partner organisations with similar ambitions to direct resources towards achieving the objectives of the statement;
    c. Inform bids for external funding to support youth participation;
    d. Assist in advocating for an enhanced roles and involvement of young people on National Park Authority boards.

Rebecca Greenfield
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Annex A

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Statement on Youth Participation

The statutory purposes of the National Park Authority are:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the national park;
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public.

In pursuing these purposes, the Authority also holds a statutory duty to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities.

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan [2025 – 2030] sets out a shared vision for the Park, which includes the following specific objectives for young people serve to support these aims:

C3 By 2030 work with 200 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.

C4 Provide curriculum-based outdoor learning and skills-based activities to enable 5,000 young people from in and around the National Park to explore and take action to enhance their environment each year.

C5. Give people from all backgrounds an opportunity to enjoy and contribute to looking after the National Park by providing at least 7,000 volunteer days per year, with at least 20% coming from under-served communities by 2029.[1]

E3 By 2030 provide at least 30 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.

E6 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.

E7. 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.

F1 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.

The Authority's role in youth participation

In December 2018, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority signed the EUROPARC Federation Youth Manifesto, committing to strengthen and embed objectives to involve, empower, educate and upskill young people in its work. This statement is a recommitment to the objectives of this Manifesto.

The Authority works with over 2,000 young people from across the National Park and surrounding areas each year to provide opportunities to: enhance their health and well-being through meaningful connections with nature; participate in hands-on

[1] Under-served communities includes young people

conservation activities; and build valuable skills, knowledge, and experience that can lead to careers in the environmental sector and the wider green economy.

Our Vision and Commitments to Young People in the Yorkshire Dales National Park:

We want to see:

1. **Empowered Voices and Leadership.** Young people are empowered to lead and have a voice in protecting the Yorkshire Dales National Park, shaping policy on nature recovery, climate change and access for all.

2. **Inclusive Access to Nature and Heritage.** Children and Young People from all backgrounds learn about and experience the National Park's landscape, nature and heritage, developing a sense of belonging and inspiring conservation and green careers.

3. **Nature Based Health and Wellbeing.** Time spent in nature supports and improves young people's mental and physical health.

4. **Empowered Young Residents.** Young residents are empowered to shape their communities, with better access to transport, services and opportunities.

5. **Pathways to Green Careers.** Apprenticeships, traineeships and volunteering provide skills and experiences for careers in conservation and the green economy.

We will support:

1. **Youth Voice in Governance.** We will embed youth representation through co-opted Youth Members and a Youth Council ensuring diverse young voices shape decisions.

2. **Inclusive activity days, nature-based learning and skills training.** We will offer inclusive activity days, nature based learning and skills training to help young people connect with the National Park and build practical knowledge, skills, wellbeing, and career pathways.

3. **Nature for Health and Wellbeing:** We will partner with schools, community groups and the healthcare sector groups to offer nature, heritage and recreational activities that support mental and physical health.

4. **Apprenticeships and traineeships**: We will provide career pathways across several areas of the Authority's work – from nature recovery and climate action to education and corporate support, ensuring opportunities are open to all.

5. **Youth Volunteering:** We will develop programmes like Young Rangers and Up Skill Down Dale, making volunteering accessible to diverse young people.

6. **Collaborate with and celebrate youth:** We will showcase young people's contribution to inspire others and highlight the value of youth engagement.