Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 7**

31 March 2026

Amplifying Youth Voice: A UK Fund Application

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Members approval for the Authority to act as the Lead Body for the submission of a large scale (c.£3million) funding bid aimed at significantly enhancing youth participation across all 15 UK National Parks.

Recommendation(s)

2. That members approve that the Authority act as Lead Body for the submission of the funding bid.

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

2026/27 Corporate plan objective (draft):

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.

YDNPA Youth Participation Statement

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

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.

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

Background

4. In recent months the UK's 15 National Park Authorities, through the Learning and Engagement Officers Group, have been developing a first stage bid to the National

Lottery Community Fund's 'UK Fund' for a project to develop and scale up youth participation across all 15 National Parks.

5. The project aims to bring together all 15 National Park Authorities to deliver a shared, ambitious programme that changes how we involve and engage with young people, including those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The project will empower children and young people aged 11–30 to connect with nature, influence decision making, and use these experiences to shape their communities and the future of the UK's protected landscapes.

6. The project aims to create a single, coherent system where young people's voices consistently shape governance, priorities, and career and development pathways across the whole National Park family. The programme embeds youth participation, equitable access, and green career opportunities and pathways into the structures, processes, services and values of every National Park Authority, ensuring each Authority has the framework to meaningfully involve and listen to young people. Project activities include the establishment of a Youth Council in each participating National Park, delivery of engagement activity such as Young Rangers, Youth Plus and support for careers/skills development.

7. If successful, the bid would resource this Authority's Access and Engagement team to deliver against the Management Plan and Corporate Plan objectives on youth participation and engagement.

8. The Authority have volunteered to act as the Lead Body for the bid. This would involve:

    i. Submitting the application to the UK Fund and lead on any response to requests for further information and clarifications, with support from the contracted Grant Co-ordinator.
    ii. Accepting the grant offer from UK Fund.
    iii. Receiving and managing the distribution of funding to the other National Parks.
    iv. Hosting and managing the core project team (project manager and project coordinator), with overall responsibility for managing the overall project delivery, ensuring compliance with terms and conditions, overseeing grant allocations, evaluation and progress reporting to the UK Fund.
    v. Providing financial, legal, HR, IT and communications support during the project delivery.

Financial Implications

9. We anticipate a total project budget of £3m over three years. The Authority would host a Project Manager and a Project Co-ordinator, based with us, to provide overall management and administration of the project. Each NPA would also have its own Project Officers. The Authority would be allocated funding to cover financial, legal, HR, IT, communications, line management and evaluation costs.

10. There is no requirement for match funding, although it will be seen as favourable if this is provided by applicants and other supporting organisations. 10 National Park Authorities have already committed £3k each, alongside a contribution from a National

Parks Partnership (NPP) corporate partner to support the development of the stage-two application.

Legal Implications

11. By acting as the Lead Body, the Authority will be accountable for ensuring successful delivery of the programme and meeting the terms and conditions set by the UK Fund. This includes managing the distribution of funds, overseeing delivery standards and maintaining audit and reporting obligations. The Authority already has relevant experience in managing similar partnerships through its role in the Pennine Way and Pennine Bridleway National Trails. During the development phase, formal agreements will be established with the other 14 National Park Authorities to outline their respective responsibilities.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

12. The project aims to address structural and cultural barriers to young people accessing National Parks. It aims to create systems which are more equitable, diverse and inclusive. This approach will not only strengthen the quality and relevance of youth input but help National Park Authorities identify wider inequities, challenge assumptions and build more inclusive policies and programmes across all their work. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken at an early stage to inform project design.

Climate Change Implications

13. Youth participation plays a powerful and positive role in tackling climate change. Young people bring urgency, creativity, and a strong sense of responsibility for the future. The project will open clearer, supported pathways into green careers – helping address national skills shortages, diversify the environmental sector, and strengthen local economies. Youth involvement in Management Plans will shape wider decisions on climate, housing, community development, and land use, ensuring policy reflects young people's needs and aspirations

Consultation

14. This project has been shaped through engagement with youth voice groups already active in National Parks, including 'Up Skill Down Dale'. Their feedback has directly shaped the project's direction and governance structures.

Human Resources, ICT and Procurement Implications

15. The programme will provide funding to support corporate functions within the Authority, and contributions towards the work of managers across finance, legal and communications.

Risk Management

16. As with the development of all large-scale projects, there is the risk that we will invest time and resource into the application for it not to be successful. Should this occur, the

National Park Learning and Engagement Officers Group will look at other funding opportunities to support the project. The investment in developing the bid is considered proportionate and justified given the scale and potential benefits of the project.

Conclusion

17. Acting as the Lead Body presents additional responsibilities for the Authority, but the programme is expected to be adequately resourced and will deliver work that strongly aligns with the Authority's strategic objectives. The initiative will also enhance the Authority's position as a sector leader in championing youth voice and participation within UK National Parks.

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Background Papers: None