YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY ITEM 7

Committee: **AUDIT & REVIEW**
Date: **11 July 2023**

Report: **REVIEW OF AUTHORITY PERFORMANCE IN 2022/23**

Purpose of the report

1. To provide Members with a detailed assessment of the Authority's performance in 2022/23.

Recommendation

2. That Members comment on and note the Authority's performance in 2022/23.

Strategic Planning Framework

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

   Corporate Plan objective.
   Plan and manage the Authority's work so as to make the most effective use of its resources…

Background

4. Each year the Authority goes through a process of setting out what we want to achieve in the year ahead. This starts with Members setting the priorities, then setting specific objectives and a budget, and finally approving detailed actions.

5. High-level progress on the 39 objectives in the 2022/23 Corporate Plan was reported to the Authority meeting in June. This report, therefore, provides a more detailed assessment, incorporating additional information on:
   a. The performance of the Authority in relation to the detailed actions in the 2022/23 Action Plan;
   b. External assessments of the Authority's performance;
   c. Comparisons with other national park authorities;
   d. Comparisons with performance in previous years.

Summary of overall performance

6. Headlines from 2022/23:
    a. The level of income generated meant that Authority expenditure (£10.8m) significantly exceeded the 2022/23 target (£8.5m) needed to meet the Authority's long-term funding objective; however, this spend was below the the projection at the end of May 2022 (£12m) – largely as a result of issues with 3 major investment programmes (FiPL; Grow Back Greener; and Westmorland Dales)
    b. Of the 39 objectives, 28 (72%) were achieved or remained on-course – down from 80% the previous years. All the Authority's objectives in relation to recreation, access and engagement were achieved;
    c. External validation continues to demonstrate that we operate high standards of corporate governance and customer service;
    d. We continue to perform well in comparison to other NPAs in relation to the NPA family performance indicators.

Objectives

7. Good progress has been made on most of the objectives. Details were reported to the Authority in June, and are not repeated in full here but highlights include:
    - Almost £900,000 was provided to local farm businesses through the Defra-funded Farming in Protected Landscapes programme;
    - Restoration works were completed on 9 traditional farm buildings, with 27 others being repaired as part of conversion to new uses;
    - With funding from Historic England, 172km^2 in the Westmorland Dales have been mapped for historical features through a LIDAR survey;
    - Carried out a Park-wide programme of repairs that meant 91% of rights of way were 'easy to use';
    - Delivered educational and skills-based activities to over 4,000 school children from in and around the National Park;
    - More than 7,000 volunteer days were provided, with under-represented groups accounting for over a fifth of those;
    - Over £50,000 was raised during the year to support repairs to the Three Peaks route;
    - The Coast to Coast Path National Trail was formally designated by the Secretary of State in October 2022 and implementation has started;
    - Completed year 2 of *Tees-Swale: Naturally Connected*, including restoring 16 ha of hay-meadow and creating 45 ha of native woodland;
    - Through *Catchment Sensitive Farming*, advice and assistance was provided to 160 farmers to help reduce diffuse pollution from agriculture;

- With funding from the Woodland Trust, White Rose Forest and others, we facilitated and supported the creation of 97 ha of new native woodland;
- Granted planning permission for 62 new dwellings, taking the average over the last 4 years to 91;
- Supported 16 local community and business projects, with grants of £185,000, through the Sustainable Development Fund;
- Determined 86% of 'minor' and 93% of 'other' planning applications within Government target times;
- 3 apprentices and 3 new trainees were recruited, taking the cumulative total to 21 apprentices and 6 trainees since 2018;
- Generated external income to support gross expenditure of almost £11 million;
- Retained the 'Customer Service Excellence' Award for the 13th year.

8. Whilst there has been good progress on many objectives, there have been problems in progressing some of them to the extent we would have wished. **Annex A** provides explanations for the objectives which haven't made the intended progress.

9. To provide more analysis of longer term performance, **Annex B** shows the trends over the last 5 years for some of the Authority's long-standing objectives.

Actions

10. Many of the 186 actions that were completed last year are linked directly to the achievement of the objectives described above. Some of the more significant *other* actions that were achieved were:
    a. acted as the 'accountable body' for the Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership, which provided almost £780,000 of funding for local projects;
    b. funded outdoor lighting improvements for [4] local businesses as part of the Dark Sky initiative?
    c. restored and improved the flood resilience of the Listed Myers Garth Bridge, so that it is no longer 'at risk'.
    d. Replaced Ellers Bridge in Dent and repaired six other bridges, including the re-decking of Ramps Holme and Linton Falls bridges and repairing the stepping stones at Slatestones, Wath
    e. with the former North Yorkshire County Council, reinstated 2 footbridges - at Low Faggergill and Wood House Bridge, Arkengarthdale;
    f. repaired 250m of previously engineered routes, including significant re-placement of the boardwalk at Humphrey Bottom on the 3 Peaks route;
    g. as part of Tees-Swale: Naturally Connected ran year 2 of the 'Uplands for Education' project, providing education activities for school children in Darlington, Northallerton and Bedale;

h. carried out a further 500m of flagging on Buckden Pike in conjunction with the National Trust;

i. launched the NLHF-funded *Heart of the Pennines Forest* project, and initiated six new woodland creation schemes in the Cumbrian area of the park;

j. determined 93% of 'other' planning applications within 8 weeks or the time limit agreed with applicant;

k. published a revised Development Management Charter;

l. resolved 148 enforcement cases;

m. published and distributed 85,000 copies of 'The Visitor 2023' as the official guide to the National Park;

n. completed a loan arrangement with the Lune Rivers Trust that enabled them to support around 30 farms to carry out works to reduce agricultural pollution;

o. refurbished the public toilets at Hawes, Horton-in-Ribblesdale and Malham.

11. **Annex C** shows the 22 actions that were not achieved, together with a brief explanation as to why.

NPA Performance Indicators

12. **Annex D** shows how this Authority compares with other National Park Authorities in England, on a number of performance measures. ✸ indicates the Authority's 'ranking' (out of 8) each year. As agreed by the Committee, the figures for the ***Lake District*** and ***North York Moors*** National Park Authorities have also been highlighted. The data shows that the Authority is in the top quartile for four of the 10 indicators, and in the bottom half for four indicators.

13. **Annex E** shows additional performance information for the Development Management service.

Conclusion

14. The Authority retains a robust, evidence-based approach to monitoring and reporting publicly on its performance. Significant progress was made on a number of objectives – notably on access, recreation and engagement, which have bounced back from the impacts of Covid. Elsewhere, significant new investment through the Farming in Protected Landscapes and Grow Back Greener schemes has helped to drive forward action across the National Park on nature recovery and climate change – and support the local economy – although there have been challenges in delivering the scale of activity originally planned.

Gary Smith
Deputy Chief Executive

27 June 2023

Objectives that were <u>not</u> on-course or achieved in 2022/23

1	***During Brexit transition, support farmers and landowners to continue to deliver a range of public benefits through national agri-environment scheme agreements and similar initiatives, including the FiPL programme.***	£1.3 million in FiPL grants	Programme target was initially reduced to £1.16 million. Final grants value was £885,000 as a result of 3 significant projects being withdrawn in February and March.	≈
17	***30% of the priority habitats outside nationally-designated wildlife sites are in good condition by 2024;***	24%	The 2021 Trends and Status Report reported that 19% of priority habitats outside of SSSIs were in 'good condition' (a decrease from 22% in 2016).	X
19	***Work with farmers and landowners to achieve and maintain stable or increasing populations for 90% of priority species by 2026, including the UK 'red-listed' upland birds — for which the National Park is renowned.***	82%	The 2021 Trends and Status Report showed 75% of priority species have populations that are either stable or increasing (a drop from 81% in 2016).	X
21	***Work with moorland managers and other stakeholders to end illegal persecution of raptors, including independent and scientifically robust monitoring, and co-ordinated hen harrier nest and winter roost site protection.***	Local coordination of nest and roost protection	Local group continuing to agree co-ordination of nest & roost monitoring led by NE, and second annual report published.	≈
24	Work with farmers and landowners to ensure that at least 70% of all woodland is in active management by 2024, including positive management of conifer plantations to increase suitable habitat for red squirrels and black grouse.	67%	The proportion of woodland in active management at the end of March 2022 was 60% (down from 64% the previous year). Awaiting updated figures from FC for 2022/23.	X
26	Undertake a 5-year programme of measures to promote the National Park as a place to live for younger, working age households (18-44) to help halt the decline in their numbers	Complete year 4 of programme	Draft Local plan will include permanent residency conditions which will prevent new housing from becoming second homes or holiday letting property.	≈
29	***Work with neighbouring authorities to produce a single, updated Local Plan for the whole of the National Park by 2023, which will help achieve the vision and objectives in the National Park Management Plan***.	Full draft Local Plan prepared	Consultation on housing sites started in April and will finish during May. Full draft version now postponed until December 2023.	≈
32	Improve the quality, variety and marketing of the tourism 'offer' to encourage more overnight stays and more visitors in the quieter months, so that the value of tourism grows by at least 5% in real terms by 2024.	3% growth	The most recent figures in 2021 shows a -13% reduction to the economic impact of tourism within the national park when compared to the baseline in 2017.	X

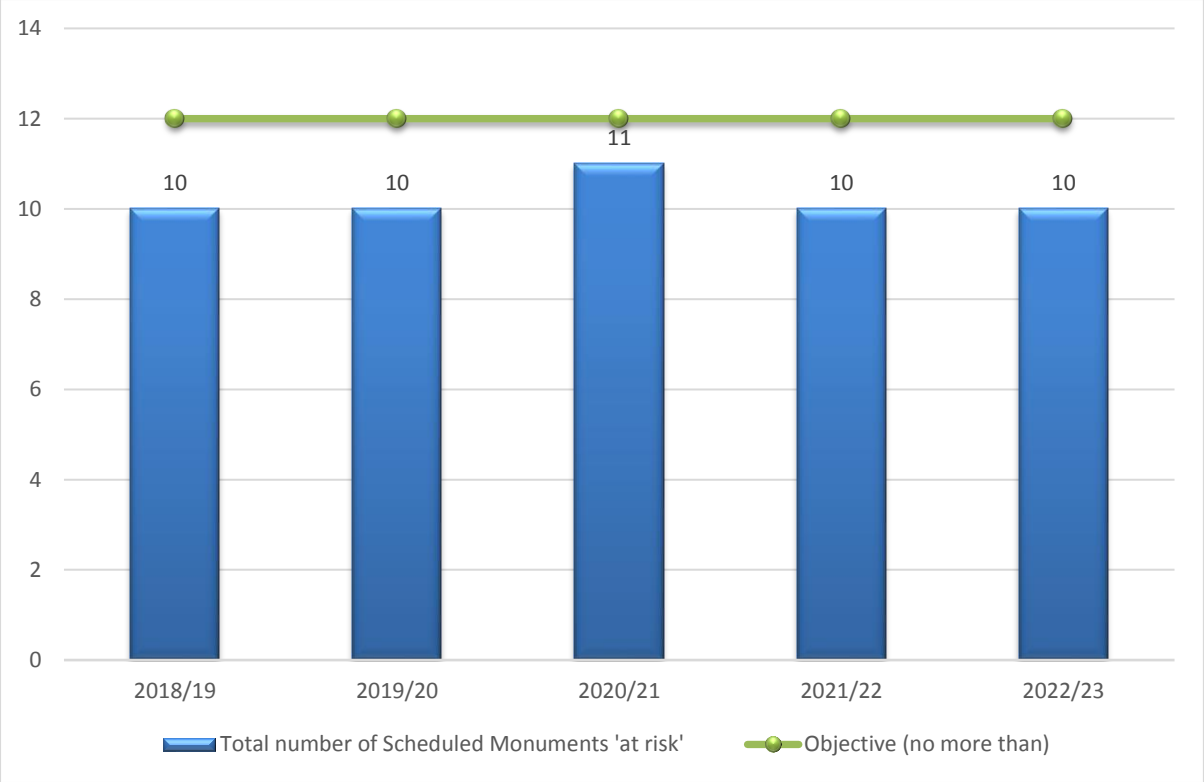
36	Operate governance arrangements that are fit for purpose, as reported through the Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Governance Report.	Unqualified External Audit opinion	Annual Governance Statement and Governance Report completed to schedule. However, national delays in public sector audit regime mean the External Audit has still not been carried	≈
38	Provide facilities and IT systems that are fit for purpose and support the effective delivery of our services, as evidenced by the external auditor's annual 'value for money' opinion and internal audit's reporting on relevant systems.	Unqualified VfM opinion	Internal audit completed and received substantial assurance but still awaiting a date to commence the external audits for 2021/22 and 2022/23 from Ernst & Young.	≈
39	By 2030, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our operations by at least 95% compared to 2005/06, and achieve annual carbon savings from woodland planting of at least 30 times our residual annual emissions.	73% reduction	A 1.8% reduction was achieved in 2022/23, taking the cumulative reduction of emissions to -71% since 2005 target.	≈

5 Year Trends

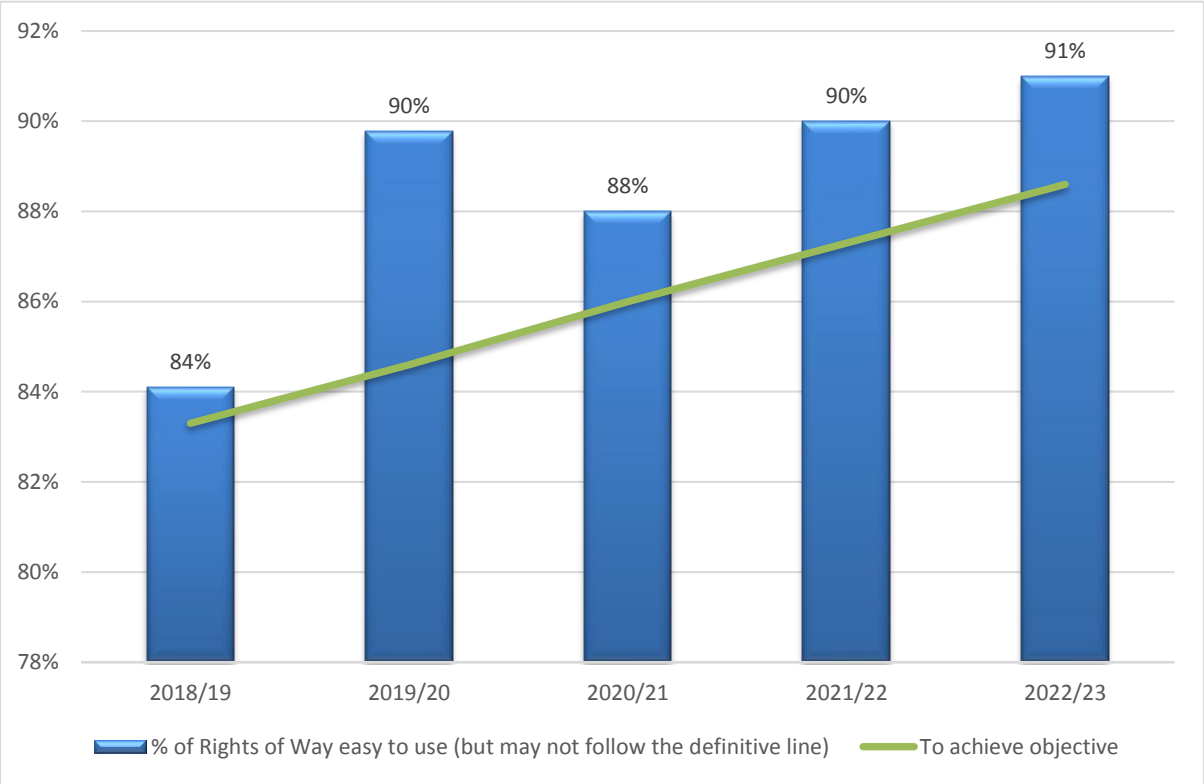
Objective 4a – Total No. of Listed Buildings 'at risk'



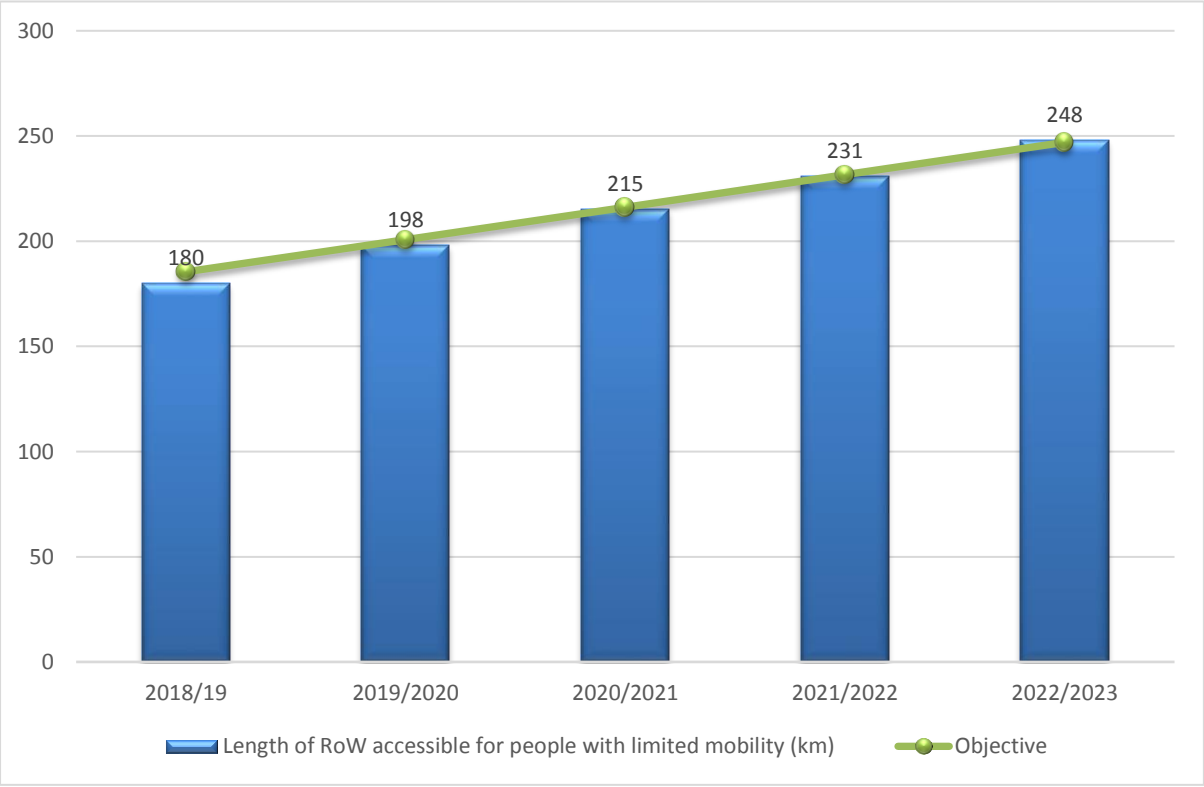
Objective 4b – Total No. of Scheduled Monuments 'at risk'



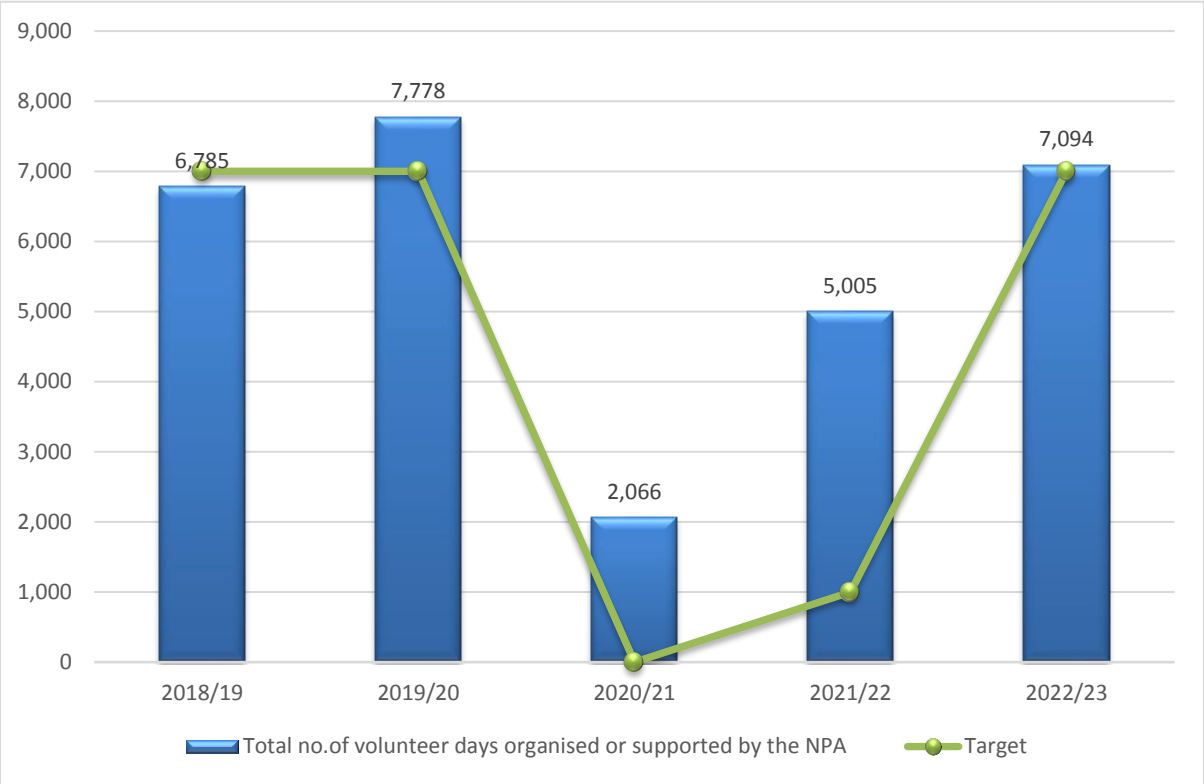
Objective 7 – Rights of Way that are 'Easy to Use'



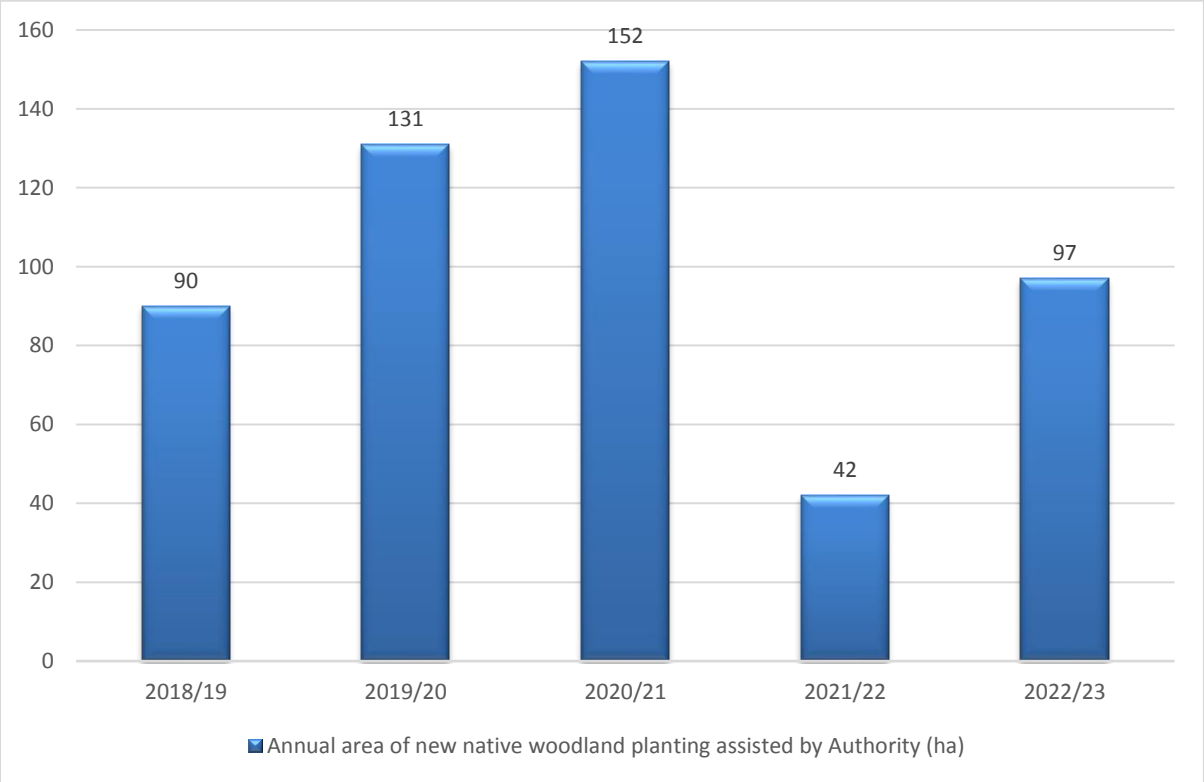
Objective 9 – Length of RoW (km) suitable for all users



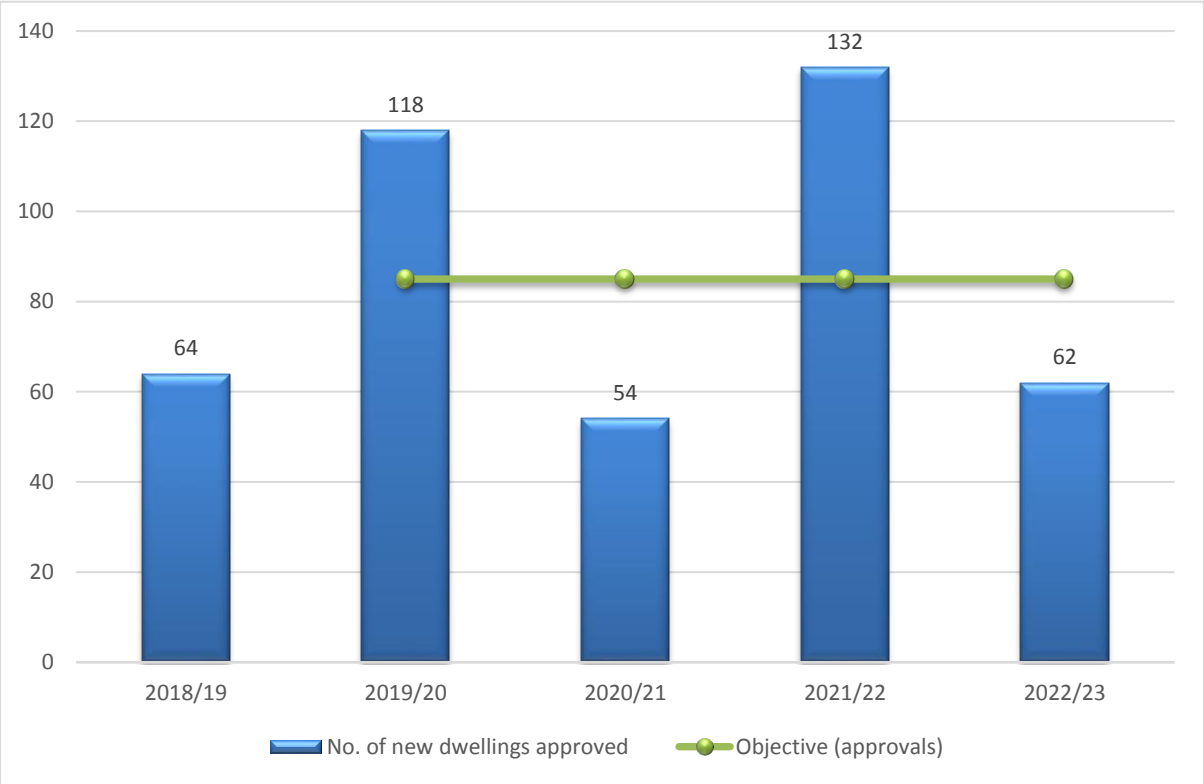
Objective 13 – Number of volunteer days provided



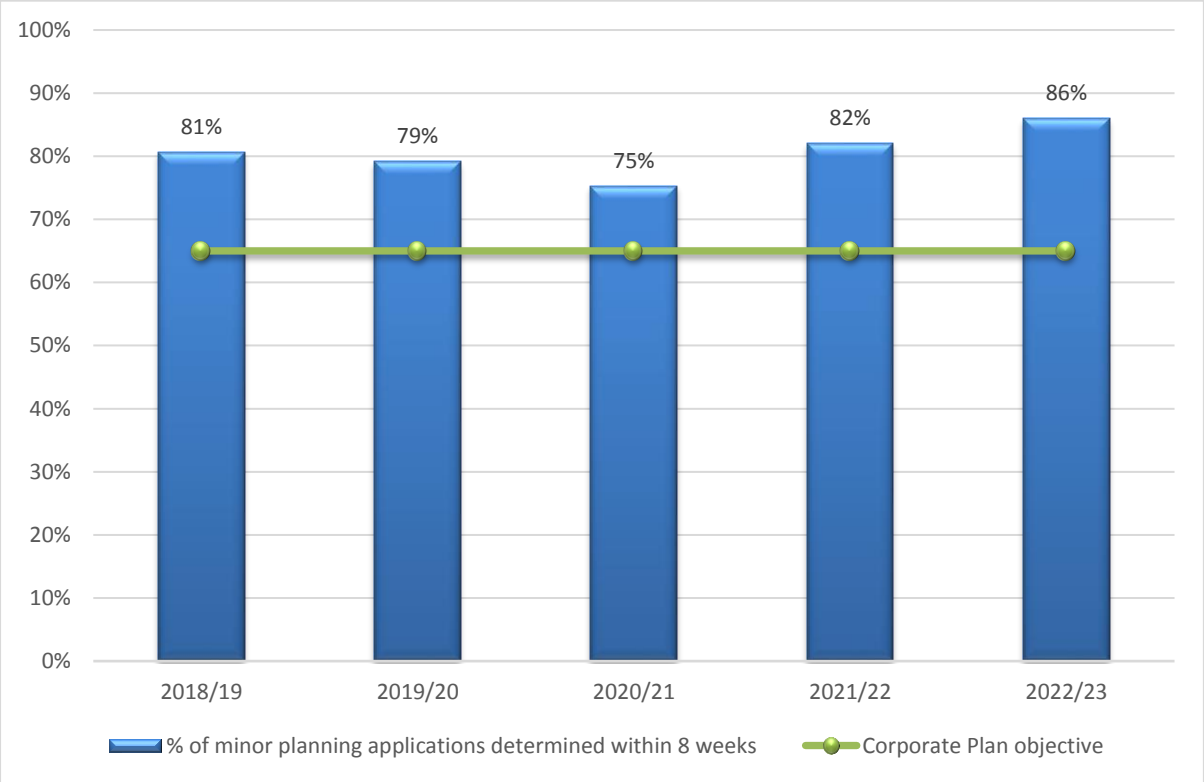
Objective 23 – Annual area of new native woodland supported (ha)



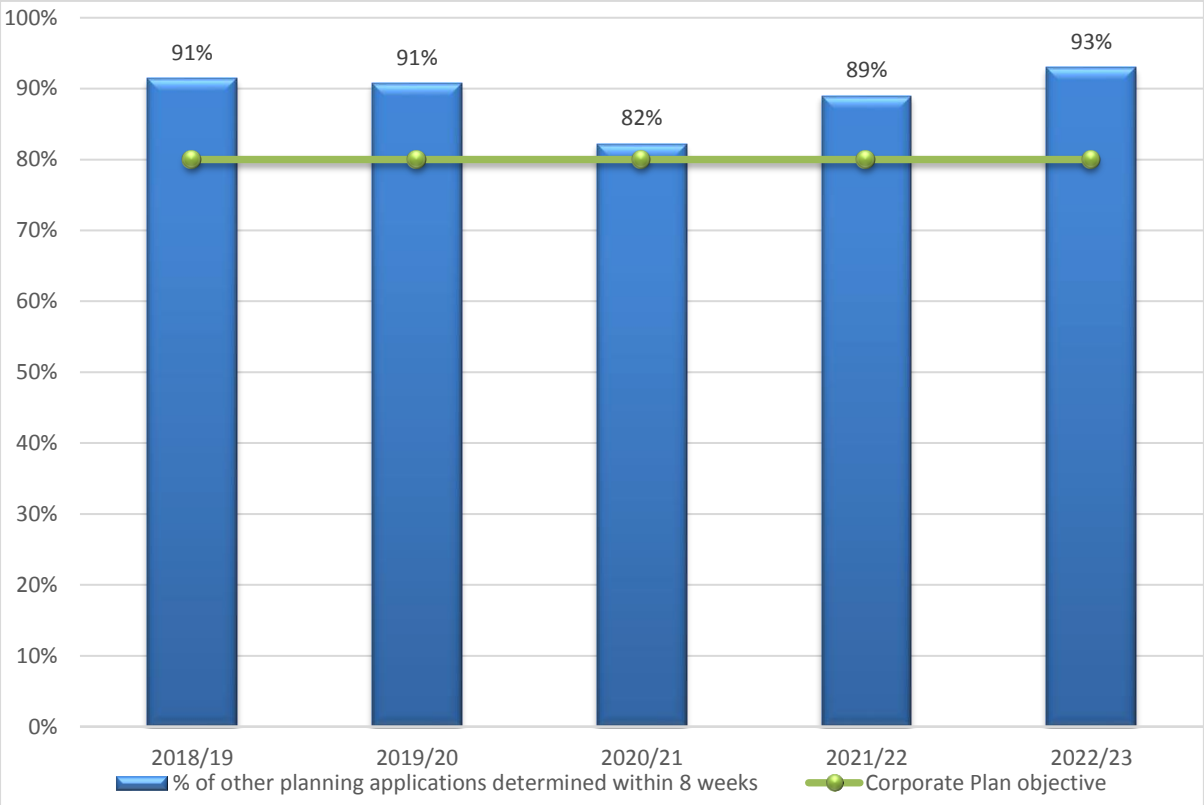
Objective 25 – No. of dwellings approved



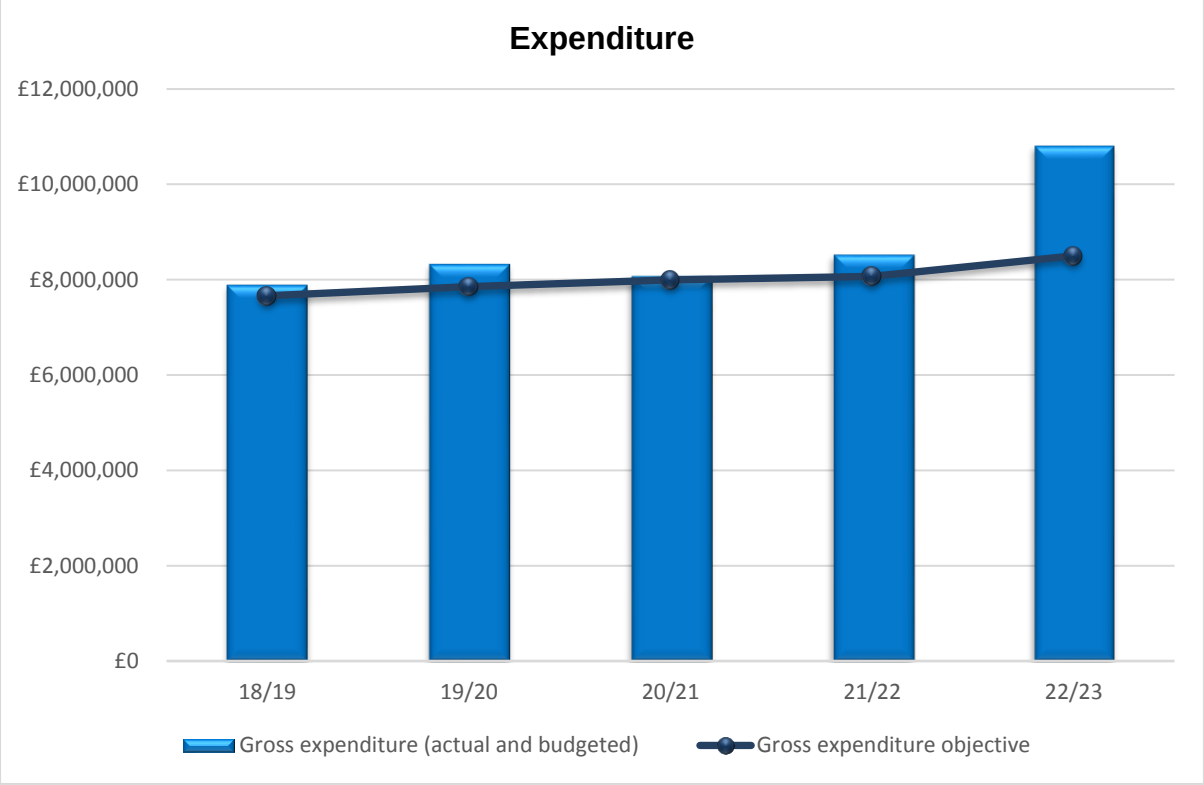
Objective 28a – 'Minor' planning applications determined within 8 weeks



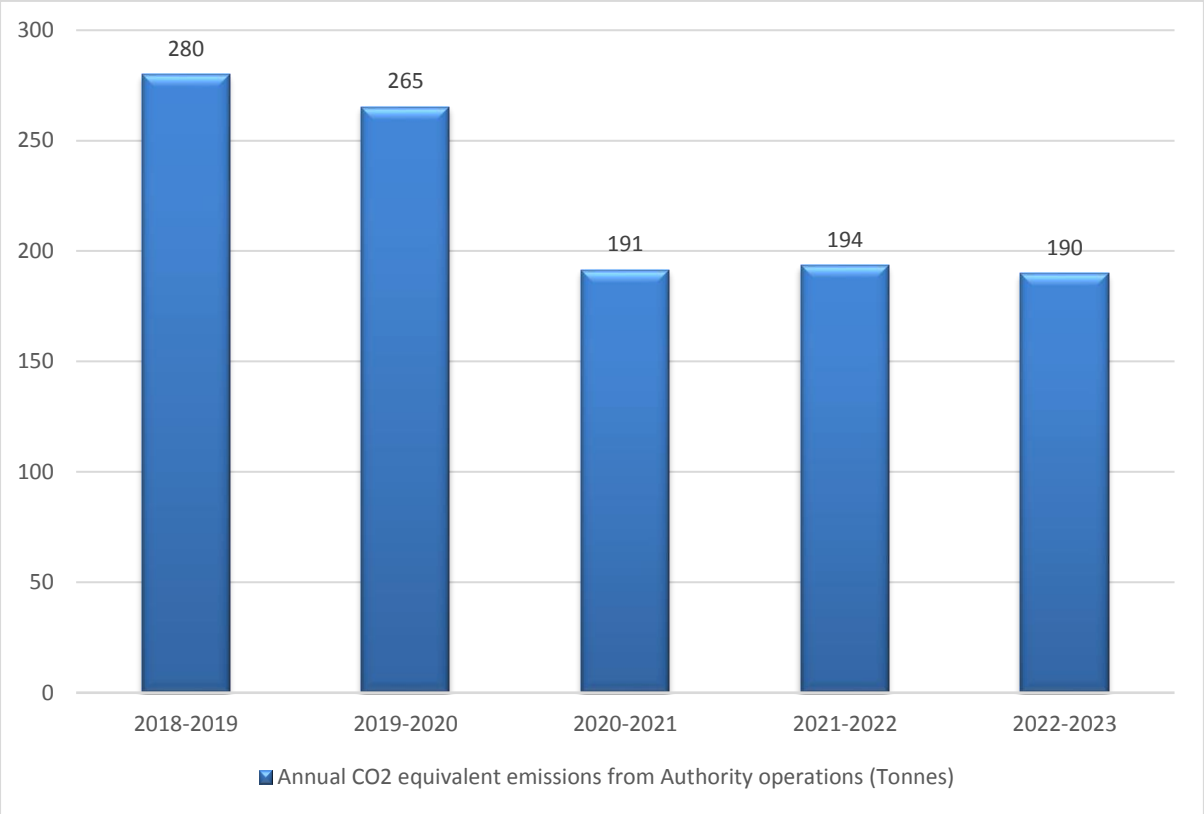
Objective 28b – 'Other' planning applications determined within 8 weeks



Objective 34 – Authority expenditure



Annual CO^2 equivalent emissions from Authority operations (Tonnes)



2022/23 – Actions not achieved

1.3	Administer the *Farming in Protected Landscapes* grant programme, generating a range of good quality applications and agreements to spend the allocated £1.3 million.	Mar	Cancelled[1]
3.2	Improve opportunities for cycling in the Westmorland Dales by extending the Yorkshire Dales Cycleway through the area linking Reeth to Dent, and adding a further 30km of signed route (pp)	Mar	Postponed[2]
3.5	Produce leaflets to promote a further 3 cycle routes, 2 horse riding routes and 2 walking routes	Mar	Postponed[3]
5.2	Re-launch and rename the former 'Out of Oblivion' website	Dec	Postponed[4]
5.3	Explore funding solutions for Lammerside Castle (p)	Aug	Cancelled[5]
5.4	Implement repairs to Smardale Kilns (pp)	Sep	Postponed[6]
5.10	Restore and improve the flood resilience of Linton Clapper Bridge, so that they it is no longer 'at risk'.	Mar	Postponed[7]
6.2	Complete first phase of Lidar/photographic survey of the Westmorland Dales area and integrate into the HER	Feb	Postponed[8]
6.3	Subject to external sponsorship, explore with Royal Museums Greenwich and the National Parks Partnership, hosting the Astronomer Photographer of the Year exhibition at DCM in 2023/24	Dec	Cancelled[9]
9.3	Install 'Changing Places' public toilet facilities at Hawes and Grassington	Mar	Postponed[10]
10.2	Work with Peak District and North York Moors NPAs and Peak District Mosaic to run NHLF-funded training pilots to increase opportunities for people from BAME backgrounds to take part in recreational activity in the	Mar	Postponed[11]

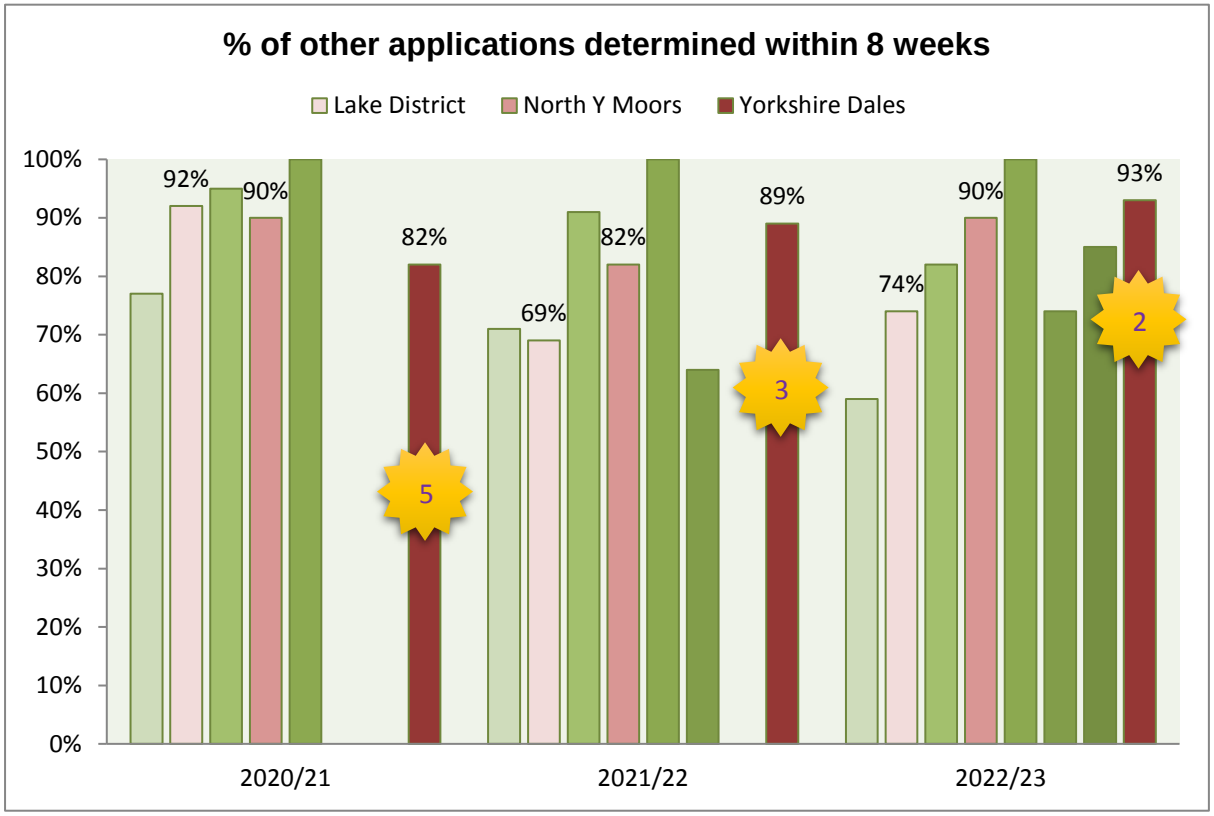
1 Programme target was initially reduced to £1.16 million. Final grants value was £885,000 as a result of 3 significant projects being withdrawn in February and March.
2 Errors in original schedule and some errors in installation. Delay in production of new schedule due to Capita being bought out.
3 Took opportunity of additional funding to have photos commissioned in the Spring.
4 The project was significantly held up when the officer at TAC (website developers) who had been the main developer left the company. The website is now operational but there will be a period of checking function, updating and adding contents before it can be publicly 'launched' in the Autumn of 2023.
5 No progress can be made because Historic England do not have an Inspectors of Ancient Monuments covering the YDNP at the moment.
6 Following initial delays, the contract had to be re-specified. Contract now let and project managers in place but works will not be completed until June 2023.
7 Works carried out to the watercourse over the last year to improve the flow of water under the bridge and reduce its risk level. However, after several attempts to obtain quotes for the main repairs to the bridge pier/abutment, the quotes received were higher than anticipated and exceeded available budget. Linton Parish Council were not in a position to make up the remaining shortfall, so works to the bridge have not yet been carried out.
8 The high number of sites (c1,500) that have come to light in the course of the project, and the time it has taken to make individual HER entries for these sites has caused the project to take longer than expected.
9 National Parks Partnership was unable to secure necessary sponsorship.
10 Facilities completed at Hawes. Delivery period extended at Grassington to re-submit Planning application. Modified design will allow us to deliver project within budget. Construction completion aim Nov/Dec 2023.
11 Application deadline has moved to July 2023

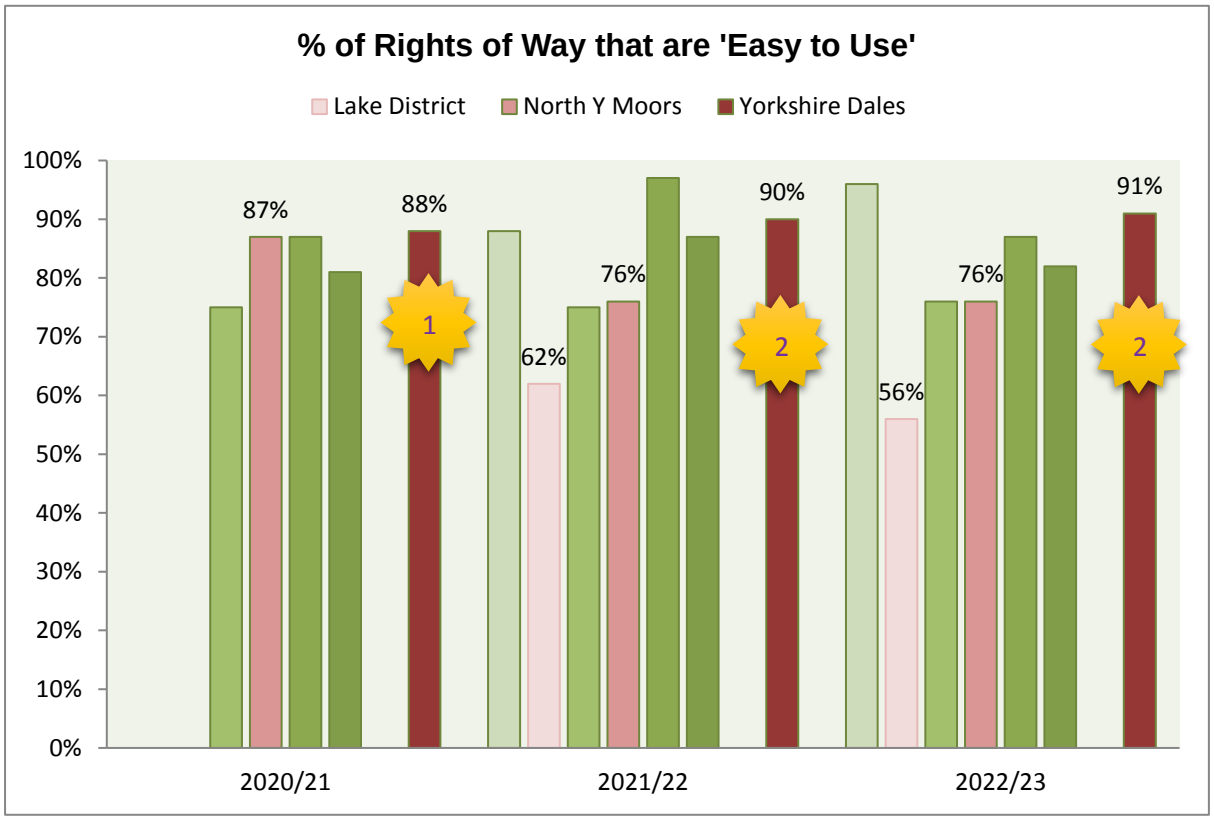
	National Park, and develop next stage application.		
10.8	As part of Our Upland Commons, deliver John Muir Awards to 60 people from disadvantaged backgrounds	Mar	Cancelled[12]
16.2	Promote opportunities for horse-riding in the National Park, through leaflets and on-line content such as film.	Mar	Postponed[13]
17.1	Let a contract to collate all YDNPA habitat condition data into a consistent format so that it can be made accessible to farmers and landowners through the 'Re-cover' webmap	Mar	Postponed[14]
23.5	Create at least 80ha of new woodland through the Woodland Trust's Grow Back Greener programme, the Forestry Commission's England Woodland Creation Offer and Trees for Climate funding streams.	Mar	Postponed[15]
25.1	Develop practical proposals for how the material from the housing design patterns project could be used to help increase and improve the supply of appropriate new housing under the new Local Plan.	Nov	Cancelled[16]
25.2	Grant permission for around 85 new dwellings, including a significant proportion of affordable housing	Mar	Postponed[17]
32.5	Provide secretariat for two meetings of the Yorkshire Dales Tourism Partnership	Mar	Cancelled[18]
36.11	Engage with Defra on the new Governance arrangements as they affect the Yorkshire Dales NPA and agree timetable for full implementation.	Mar	Cancelled[19]
37.3	Review and update HR policies/procedures, including Sickness Absence, Home-working and Recruitment	Mar	Postponed[20]
38.6	Carry out a review of the implementation of MS365	Mar	Postponed[21]
38.8	Complete acquisition of plot for a potential new workshop building at Langcliffe Quarry to replace current facilities at Stonedykes Barn.	Mar	Postponed[22]

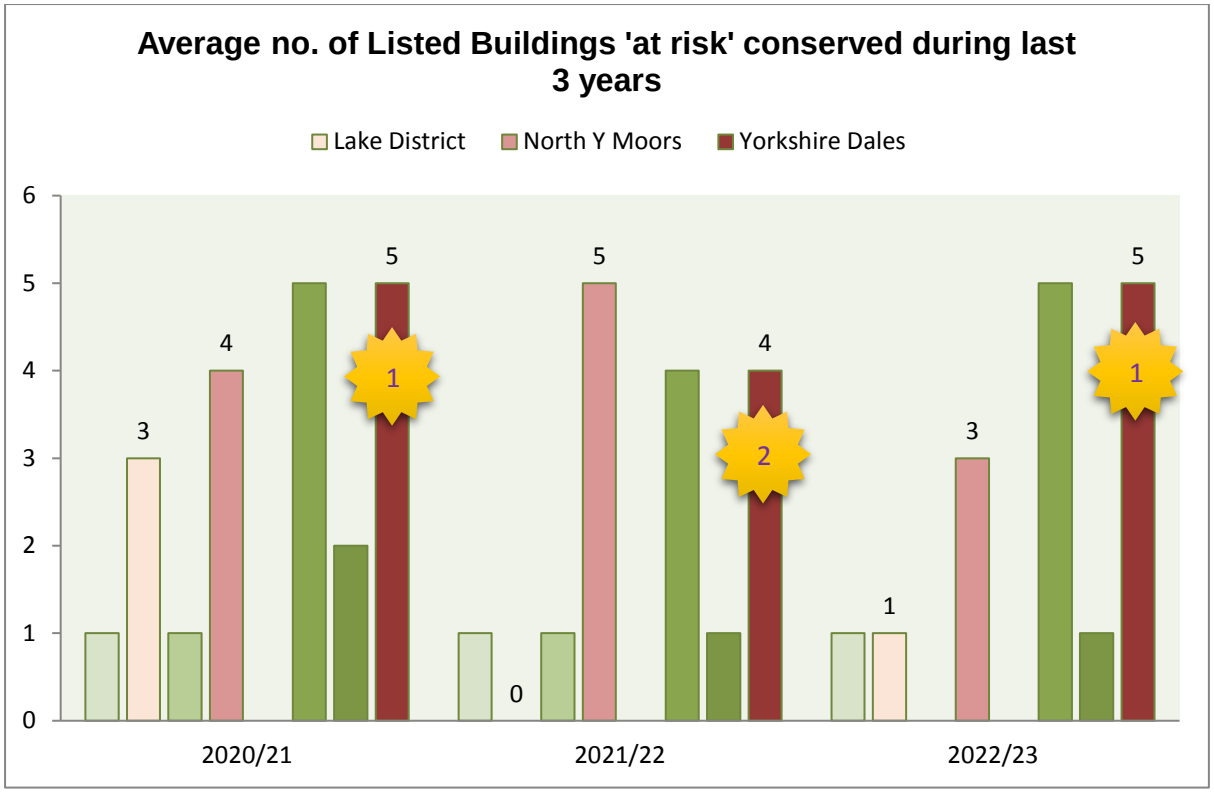
[12] 42 individuals were supported during the year. The initial target set by the partnership was ambitious and there is no intention to try to make up the shortfall in 2023-24.
[13] Film and website updates still in production.
[14] The contract for this work was tendered but there were no bids. Now investigating alternative approaches, including potentially using in-house resources.
[15] Wader and peat guidance hindered the target being achieved. A revised (lower) target has been agreed with the Woodland Trust.
[16] Housing design material will be incorporated into the revised Design Guide, which is due to be published in 2024.
[17] 62 new dwellings were approved. The average over the past 4 years is still more than 90, so overall objective is still being achieved.
[18] Tourism Partnership is made up primarily of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) and District Councils covering the National Park. Meetings cancelled due to uncertainty following the demise of Welcome to Yorkshire, the effect of local government reorganisation and Destination Management Organisations' review.
[19] Defra has decided not to proceed with any changes to National Park Authority governance arrangements for the foreseeable future.
[20] Flexitime Scheme policy, TOIL policy and Annual Leave policy were reviewed/updated. Not enough time to complete Sickness Absence, Home-working and Recruitment – these will be reviewed in 2023/24.
[21] Review put back until further elements of MS365 have been implemented, such as SharePoint.
[22] Heads of terms were agreed between Craven District Council and the Authority in March. Solicitors are now preparing the final legal documentation.

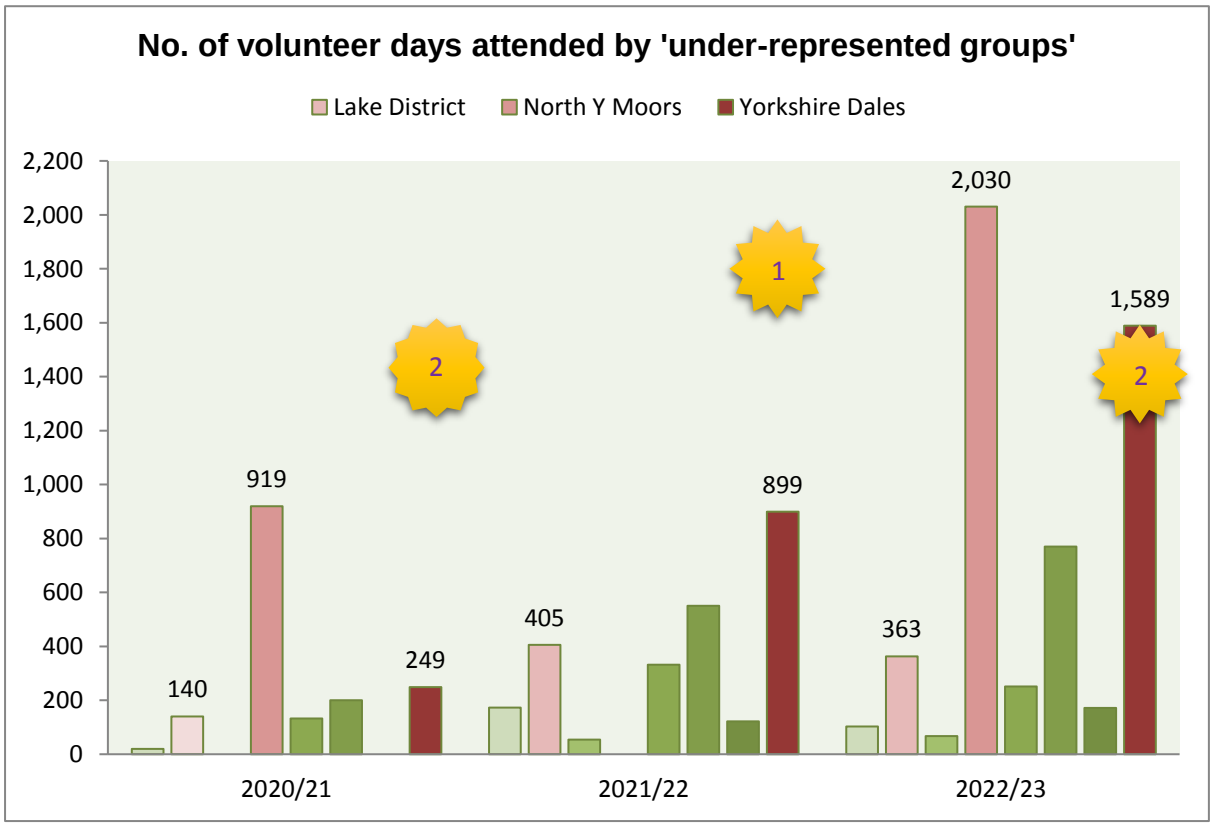
National Park 'Family' Performance Indicators

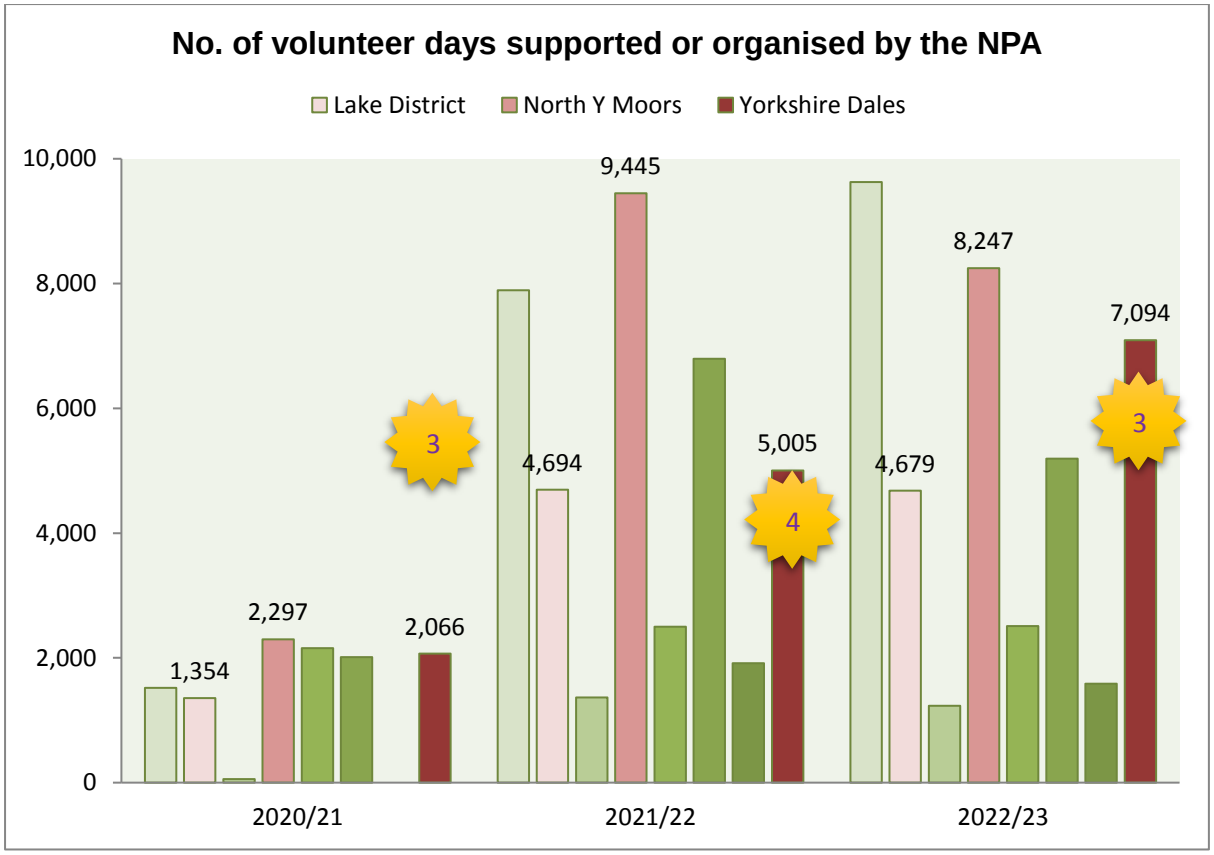
High performing or significantly improving



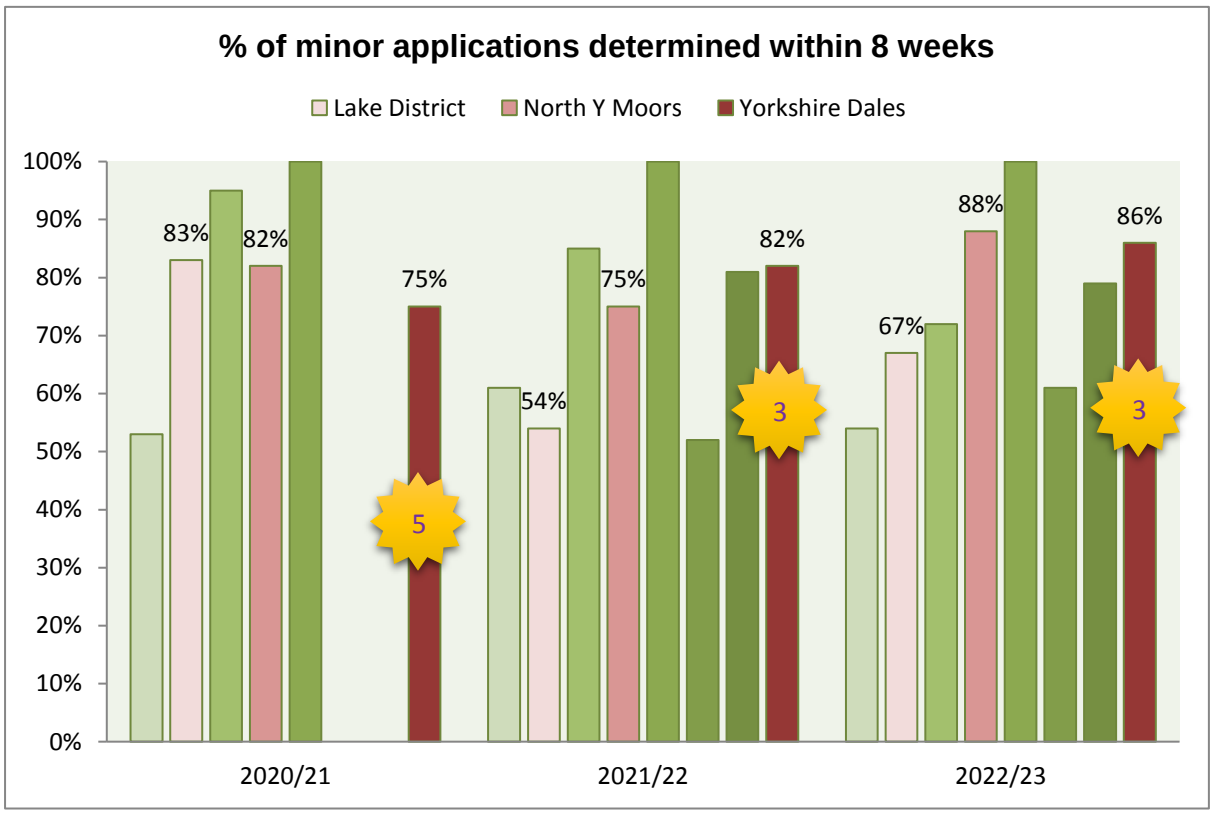


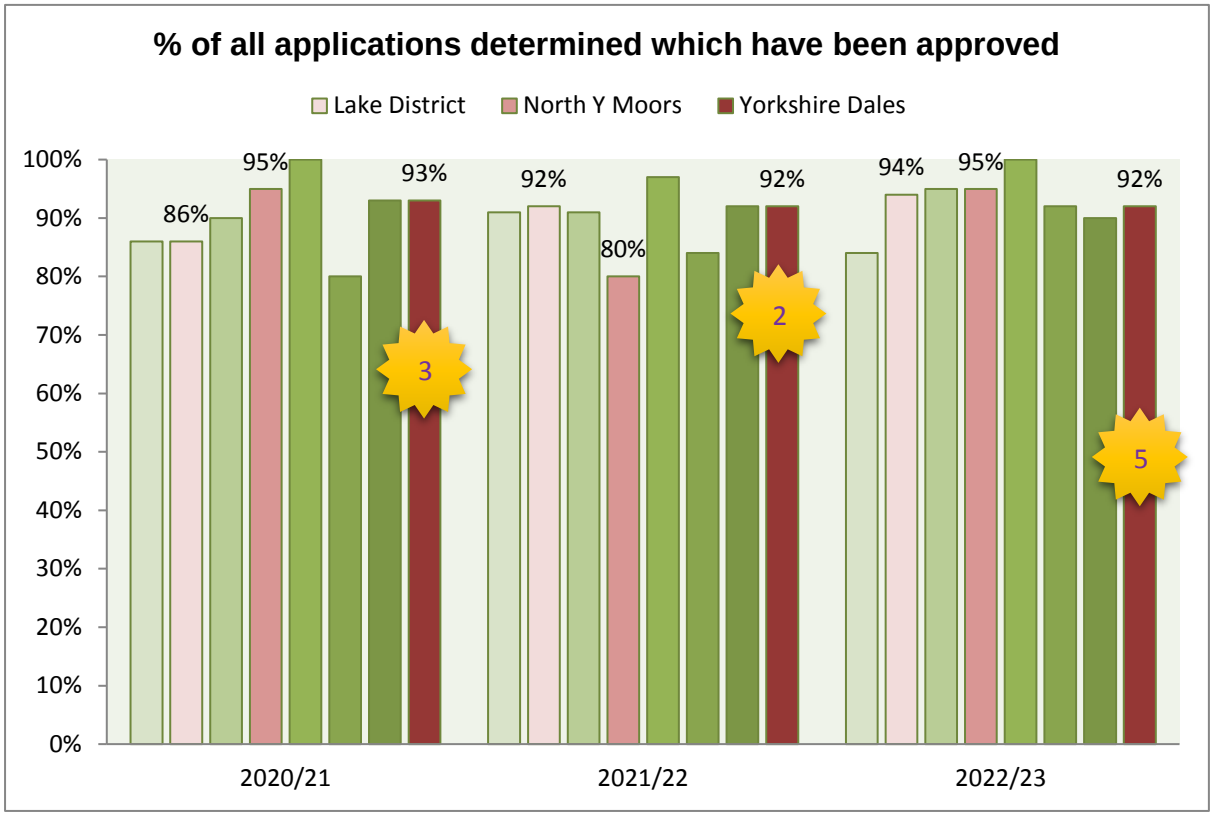

Average no. of Listed Buildings 'at risk' conserved during last 3 years
Lake District
North Y Moors
Yorkshire Dales
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
3
4
5
1
0
5
4
2
1
3
5
1
2020/21
2021/22
2022/23


No. of volunteer days attended by 'under-represented groups'
Lake District
North Y Moors
Yorkshire Dales
2,200
2,000
1,800
1,600
1,400
1,200
1,000
800
600
400
200
0
140
919
2
249
405
1
899
363
2,030
1,589
2
2020/21
2021/22
2022/23

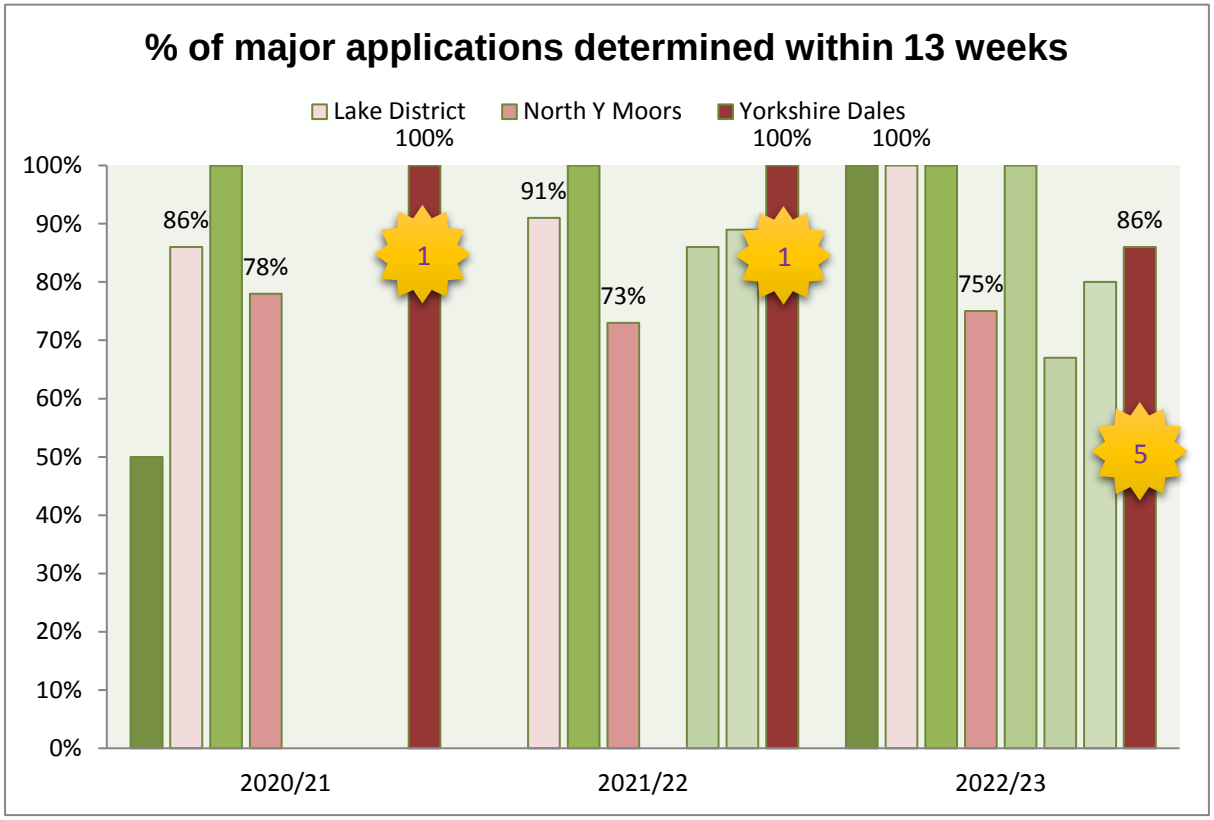


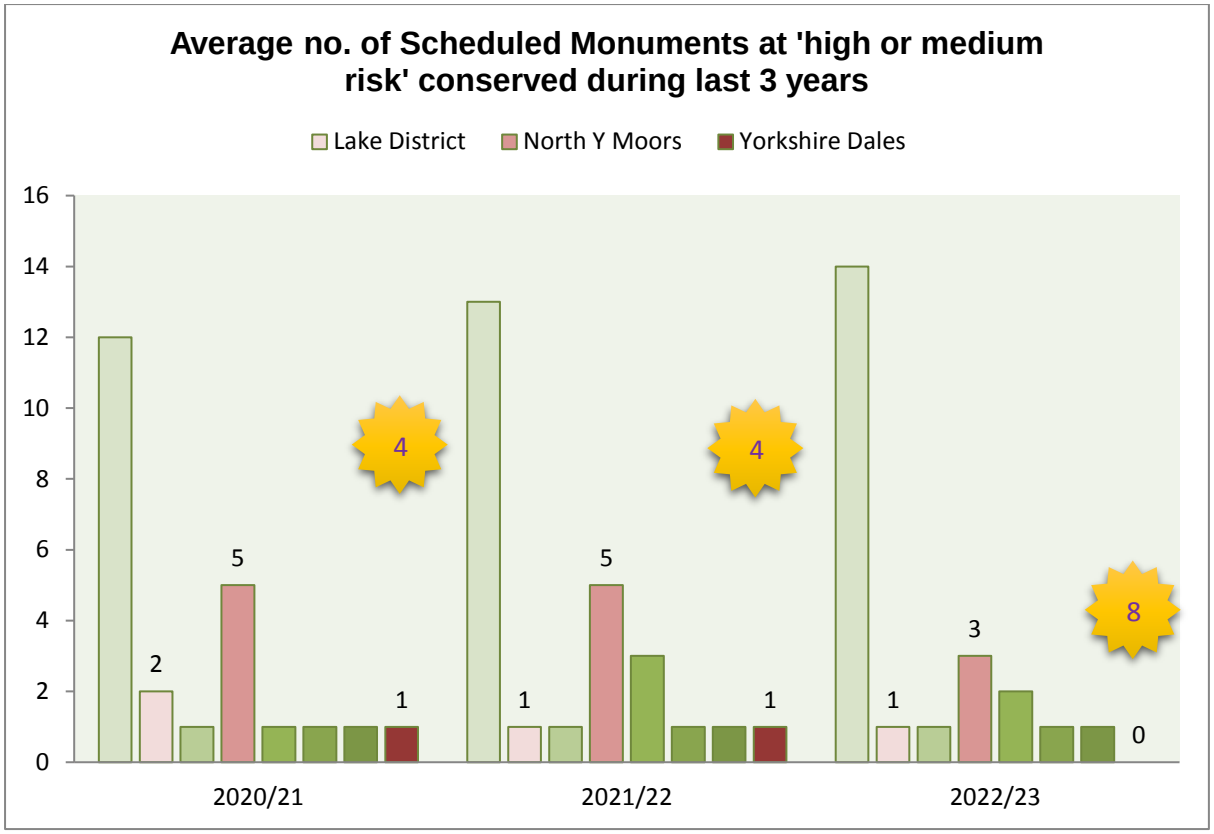
Adequate or stable performance

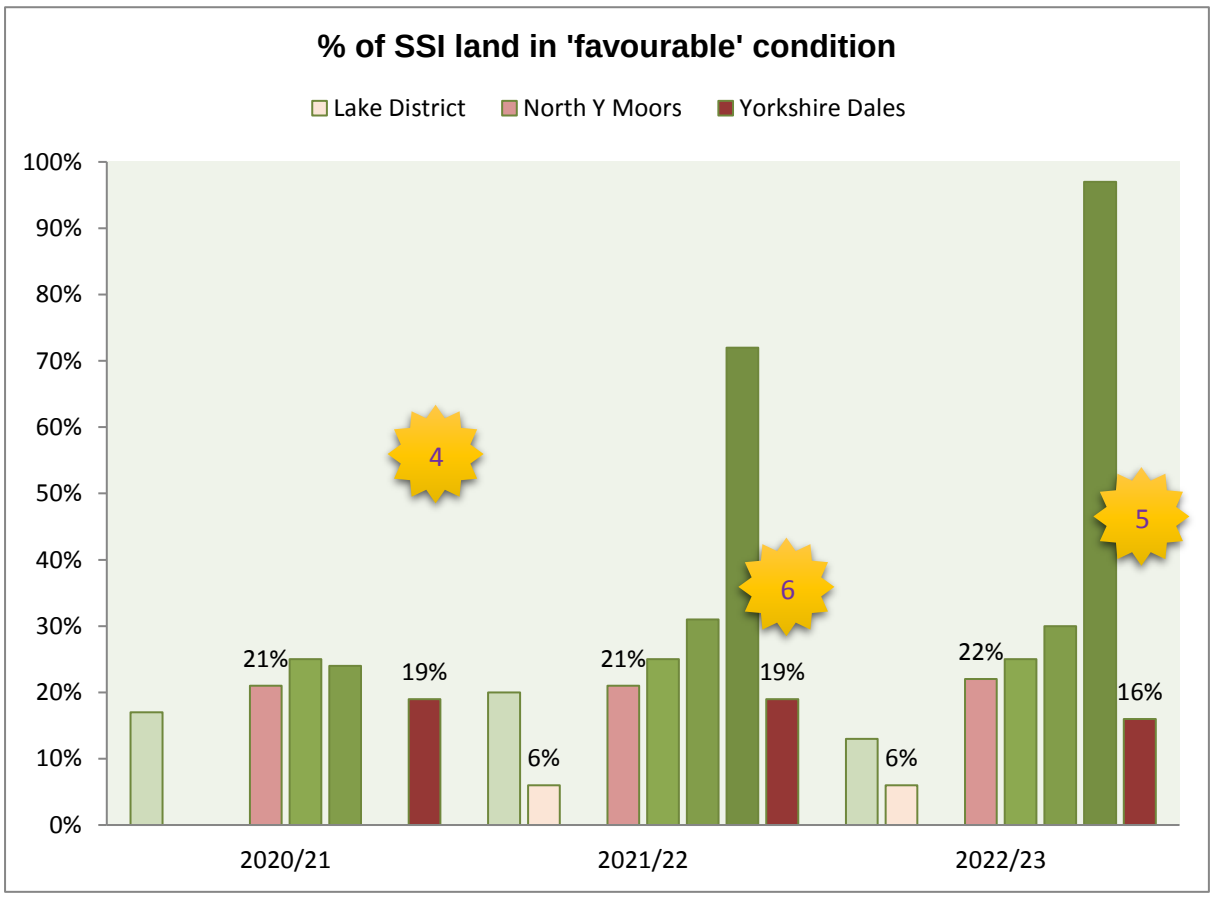



% of all applications determined which have been approved
Lake District
North Y Moors
Yorkshire Dales
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
86%
95%
93%
92%
80%
92%
94%
95%
92%
3
2
5
2020/21
2021/22
2022/23

Declining


% of major applications determined within 13 weeks
Lake District
North Y Moors
Yorkshire Dales
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
86%
78%
100%
91%
73%
100%
100%
100%
75%
86%
1
1
5
2020/21
2021/22
2022/23


Average no. of Scheduled Monuments at 'high or medium risk' conserved during last 3 years
Lake District
North Y Moors
Yorkshire Dales
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
2
5
1
4
1
1
5
1
4
1
1
3
0
8
2020/21
2021/22
2022/23


% of SSI land in 'favourable' condition
Lake District
North Y Moors
Yorkshire Dales
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
4
21%
19%
6%
6
21%
19%
6%
22%
5
16%
2020/21
2021/22
2022/23

Annex E

Annual Planning Performance Summary

		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
No. of planning applications received		695	717	661
No. of planning applications:				
	determined	482	561	541
	withdrawn	60	84	93
	other closures		2	-
% of applications approved		93%	92%	92%
% of decisions:				
	delegated	87%	96%	95%
	by Committee	13%	4%	5%
No. of technical/prior approval applications received		63	42	30
No. of applications to discharge conditions received		114	97	97
No. of non-material amendment applications received		31	23	15
No. of pre-application enquiries completed.		312	325	234
No. of land charge searches completed		502	486	419
No. of Appeals received		12	11	11
No. of Appeals	allowed	3	1	4
	dismissed	12	4	11
	allowed/dismissed (dual decision)	0	0	0
	withdrawn	0	0	0
No. of enforcement cases opened		41	88	148
No. of enforcement cases closed		77	81	148
% of applications valid on receipt		54%	48%	47%