Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 7**

01 October 2024

Review of Deadline for Public Questions/Statements

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval for a change to the deadline for public questions/statements to the Authority's meetings.

Recommendation

2. That the deadline for receipt of public questions/statements is changed to 2 working days before the day of the meeting.

Strategic Framework

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

    - Corporate Objective 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. All of the Authority's Committee and Sub-Committee meetings are open to the public and press (The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and the Local Government Act 1972). In addition, the Authority has allocated up to 15 minutes at the start of meetings to allow members of the public the opportunity to ask questions and/or to make statements that relate to the work of the Authority or the appropriate Committee.

5. Presently, anyone wishing to ask a question or make a statement must 'register' that intention with the Chief Executive by 12 noon on the working day before the meeting. These arrangements have been in place for over 20 years. Members should note that this procedure is in addition, and separate from, the opportunity to speak for or against planning applications being considered by the Planning Committee and is not part of this consideration.

6. Over the past 24 months, the Authority has received 16 requests to read a public question/statement at an Authority meeting. In conjunction with the Chair, officers try to prepare a full response to each question/statement received, which is then read out at

the meeting. It is felt that it is better to deal with a question about a relevant matter on the day rather than providing a written response at a later date – a process adopted by some organisations.

7. The preparation of a response often involves coordination between a number of officers and the Chair. However, the time available to deal with what can be complex and difficult issues is proving increasingly challenging as it has become the norm for requests to be submitted very close before the deadline. Therefore, it is proposed that the deadline for public questions/statements is changed to 2 working days before an Authority meeting. This would mean, for example, that the Authority/ Committee meetings would have a deadline of 5pm on the Thursday before the Authority or Committee meeting on the following Tuesday.

8. Research and comparison with the public question/statement deadline of other National Parks Authorities was carried out and the results are set out in **Appendix A.** The proposed change to the deadline would bring the Authority in line with its closest geographical NPAs (the Lakes and the Moors).

Financial Implications

9. None.

Legal Implications

10. None. The Authority has the flexibility to set the deadline.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

11. None.

Conclusion

12. The proposed change of deadline will allow officers and the Chair of a Committee sufficient time to prepare a detailed response when responding to a public question/statement. If agreed by Members, the meetings guidance for Members of the Public will be updated accordingly.

David Butterworth
Chief Executive

Appendix A

NPA	Deadline for receipt of public question/statement	No of days before the meeting	When the NPA provides a response
Lake District	Noon on the Wednesday before the meeting	2.5	No debate/ a prepared response or future agenda and response
North York Moors	Two clear working days before the meeting	2	By the Chair at the meeting
Peak District	12 noon two working days before the meeting	2.5	By the Chair at the meeting
Northumberland	10 Clear working days before the meeting	10	By the Chair at the meeting or in writing later
Broads	At least 4 working days before the meeting	4	By the Chair at the meeting
Dartmoor	24 hrs before commencement of the meeting	1	Within 14 days of receipt
South Downs	24 hrs before commencement of the meeting	1	Within 14 days of receipt
Exmoor	4pm on the working day before the meeting	0.25	Response at the meeting or deferred for a written response
Yorkshire Dales	**12 noon on the working day before the meeting**	**0.5**	**Response at the meeting**

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