Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 7**

Standards Committee

04 March 2025

Roles and responsibilities of Members

Purpose of the Report

1. To review the Roles and responsibilities of Members document.

Recommendation

2. To recommend to Authority that the revised Roles and Responsibilities document attached at the **Appendix** is adopted.

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:

    - **Corporate Plan Objective 32:**
      Operate governance arrangements that are fit for purpose, as reported through the Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Governance Report.

Background

4. The roles and responsibilities of Members are set out in a document which is included in the Members' Handbook. This was last reviewed in 2020 and has been reviewed in line with the Authority's cyclical review of policies.

5. The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the roles and responsibilities of Members of the Authority and to set out the role descriptions for Members, the Chair of the Authority, Member Champions and Co-opted Members.

6. A light touch review of this document has been conducted. Duplicate information which can be found in other documents in the Members' Handbook has been removed with hyperlinks to other key documents included.

7. A new introduction section has been added together with a new Appendix 4 which sets out the role of co-opted Members.

8. The performance measures for Members have also been refreshed to make them SMART. These changes are shown highlighted.

Financial Implications

9. None

Legal Implications

10. None

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

11. None

Clare Burrows
Director of Corporate Services

Appendix

Document Status	
Date adopted	25 March 2025
Adopted by	Authority
Lead Officer	Monitoring Officer
Date of next review	March 2030

Roles and responsibilities of Members

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the roles and responsibilities of Authority.

1.2 The role descriptions for Members, the Chair of the Authority, Member Champions and Co-opted Members are set out in more detail in the Appendices.

2. National Park Purposes

2.1 National Parks exist to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public. In pursuing those purposes, a National Park Authority is also required to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park. For all Members of the Authority, the first consideration should always be the statutory National Park purposes and, in pursuing those purposes, the related socio–economic duty.

3. Membership of the Authority

3.1 The membership of the Authority is established by legislation which currently states that the Authority has 25 Members. Fifteen are appointed by local authorities and the other ten by the Secretary of State. The appointments are as follows:

- 10 elected Members appointed by North Yorkshire Council
- 3 elected Members appointed by Westmorland and Furness Council
- 1 elected Member appointed by Lancashire County Council
- 1 elected Member appointed by Lancaster City Council

- 4 elected Members appointed by the Secretary of State to represent National Park parishes
- 6 Members appointed by the Secretary of State.

3.2 Appointment of Members to the local authority positions is solely at the discretion of the appointing authorities. Any authority which appoints three or more Members (i.e. North Yorkshire Council and Westmorland and Furness Council) is obliged by the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to ensure that the appointments it makes are in line with the political balance of the authority concerned. Local authorities also have to have regard to the desirability of appointing members of the council who represent wards situated wholly or partly within the National Park.

3.3 Local authority and Parish Members should consider, along with the local authorities who appoint them, whether there are appropriate ways in which they can report back to and influence those appointing local authorities in relation to the work of the National Park Authority.

3.4 Although some Authority Members perform specific roles or have distinct responsibilities, the fundamental principle is that all Members have equal status.

3.5 The National Park Authority operates in law as a body corporate. A Member of a National Park Authority, in their individual capacity, has no executive powers and can exercise no lawful authority, though it is possible for Members collectively to delegate a decision to an Officer, whilst instructing the Officer to consult one or more named Members before reaching a decision.

3.6 The essential roles of Authority Members are:

- the formulation of Authority policy, priorities and objectives;
- taking decisions on specific issues such as planning applications and spending proposals;
- reviewing and monitoring the performance of the Authority in relation to the achievement of its policies and objectives;
- exercising effective stewardship over the Authority's assets;
- setting the corporate governance framework within which Officers operate

3.7 Members should not become involved in the detailed implementation of policies and decisions, except in connection with the performance of their role, nor in the management of the Authority's staff.

3.8 Members also have a key role externally as advocates and ambassadors for the Authority, and for the National Park. This is exercised in local communities and on the regional, national and international stages.

4. Members representing the Authority

4.1 Members of the Authority are, from time to time, appointed to represent the Authority formally on other bodies, on partnerships to which the Authority is a party, and at specific events, e.g. conferences or seminars. These roles are primarily to ensure that the Authority's policies and position are properly understood and influential but they do give the opportunity for general networking to promote the Authority and the National Park. Members undertaking such a representative role are expected to understand, present and support Authority policy. Officer support and briefings are available to assist Members in doing so. Members undertaking such roles provide feedback to officers and to Members following meetings.

4.2 Members who live within the National Park and/or represent constituents living within the National Park in their role as a Unitary, County, City or Parish Councillor have an additional representative role within and outside the National Park Authority, by virtue of their position on another local authority and their close contact with the population of the National Park. Members who are Councillors can, at times, have to reconcile different policies between the nominating authority and the National Park Authority, taking into account local constituency issues, and this can undoubtedly give rise to difficulties for such Members. However, when Members are carrying out their role as a National Park Member, it is the policies and procedures of the National Park Authority that apply.

4.3 Following the Localism Act 2011, guidance was issued to Members on openness and transparency in personal interests which gave practical advice on declaring personal interests. Members should ideally seek advice from the Monitoring Officer, although ultimately the decision on whether to register or declare an interest remains with the Member.

4.4 When acting as an Authority Member, there is a clear duty to act in the best interests of the Authority, and to seek to promote the statutory purposes and the national park objectives. In such situations Members, even if not formally representing the Authority, are performing an important representative role, setting the National Park Authority and its policies in the best possible light and communicating the core values, objectives and interests of the Authority as a whole.

4.5 Members may be invited to attend events or functions, with some reference made to their membership of the National Park Authority in an incidental sense. Members in such situations will need to best judge whether they are invited to present a personal view of the National Park Authority's policies and objectives or a corporate view. In either scenario, Members should bear in mind the principle of collective responsibility for decisions reached by the Authority.

5. Members' roles within the Authority

5.1 The Authority meets quarterly. The Authority has established the following Committees, which advise the Authority and also exercise powers delegated to them by the Authority:

- Finance and Resources (13 Members and 2 Co-opted Members)

- Audit and Review (12 Members)
- Planning (17 Members)
- Standards (5 Members)

5.2 Members usually serve on either the Finance and Resources Committee or the Audit and Review Committee; no Member serves on both.

5.3 The Authority appoints Members to serve on Committees, and each Committee elects its own Chair and Deputy annually.

5.4 In terms of distinctive Member roles, the Authority appoints Member Champions in relation to seven specific areas of the Authority's work:

- Natural Environment
- Cultural Heritage
- Recreation Management
- Promoting Understanding
- Development Management
- Sustainable Development
- Corporate Management

5.5 Member Champions increase awareness of the work of Members amongst officers, and demonstrate Members' interest in, and encouragement of, the work of officers. Member Champions report back formally to the Authority in respect of their brief.

6. Members and decision making

6.1 All 25 Members represent all of the National Park, and no Member has "constituents". Nevertheless, it is legitimate, and important, that Members with knowledge of the views and needs of local people represent those views when relevant to decisions which are being taken. In the same way, Members with relevant specialist knowledge or expertise related to the Authority's statutory purposes need to bring it into the decision-making process**.**

7. The formulation of Authority policy, priorities and objectives

7.1 The work programmes for delivering policy are approved each year by the full Authority, through a three-stage process:

- Priority-setting, which is conducted as a major exercise every three years, with "light touch" reviews in intervening years;

- Agreeing the annual budget for the Authority and the medium-term objectives for each work programme, on the basis of advice from the Finance and Resources Committee;
- Agreeing a detailed list of actions that will be undertaken in the next 12 months to help deliver each objective.

7.2 These processes collectively lead to the production of a detailed annual Corporate Plan, which contains all of the Authority's objectives, and sets out the progress that will be made towards achieving them. This is backed up by a detailed Action Plan.

7.3 There is an important role for Members in shaping policy before formal reports come forward for discussion and approval. This may be exercised through the Policy Development Forum, Working Groups set up to deal with a specific task, or by working with officers in the role of Member Champion.

8. Performance review

8.1 Each year the Authority produces a Corporate Plan, setting out the objectives and targets for the coming 12 months. These fall into three interlinked categories:

- Objectives;
- Actions to achieve those Objectives;
- Performance measures showing the specific progress made towards achieving the Objectives over the year.

8.2 Progress in relation to these Objectives and the detailed list of actions is reported to the Senior Management Team and to the Audit and Review Committee. In addition, progress on Objectives is reported annually to the full Authority.

8.3 Performance reviews are carried out by small Member/Officer working groups which usually include the relevant Member Champion and a member of the Audit and Review Committee. These reviews look at areas where the Authority is not achieving what it has set out to do and/or has identified a specific need to reduce cost; and/or has identified a need to improve value for money. The exact scope of each review is determined in advance by the Audit and Review Committee and the results are reported back to that Committee.

8.4 Major project reviews are carried out by officers who report to the Audit and Review Committee on up to two major projects each year. These reviews detail why the project was established, what has been achieved, what lessons have been learned and make recommendations for future project development and management.

9. Planning

9.1 Planning policy is determined by the full Authority and is set out in the Yorkshire Dales Local Plan. The law requires that all planning applications must be determined in accordance with the policies set out in the Local Plan, unless material considerations indicate that a departure from policy is justified in any

particular case. Whether a particular issue is capable of constituting a material consideration is a matter of law, upon which officers advise Planning Committee Members. How much weight should be given to something which is capable of being a material consideration is a matter for Members and will depend on the circumstances of each individual case.

9.2 The Planning Committee determines those planning applications which may have significant policy implications or involve potential departures from policy, and also considers whether to authorise enforcement action when a breach of planning control has been detected. The Authority's Planning – Good Practice Guide provides further guidance on the role of Members on planning matters, particularly in relation to decision making, lobbying and bias and predetermination.

10. Corporate Governance

10.1 The 25 Members of the Authority have primary responsibility for the good governance of the organisation. Members are responsible for ensuring that the Authority is well governed, that it has clear values and purposes, performs effectively, is accountable, takes clear decisions, manages risks, and displays high ethical standards.

10.2 The Seven Principles of public life apply to anyone who works as a public office holder. This includes people who are elected or appointed to a public office nationally and locally and so applies both to Authority Members and staff.

10.3 Based on the Seven Principles, the Authority has adopted its own six core values:

- **Integrity**: All our relationships will be built on honesty, transparency, equality and impartiality.
- **Accountability**: We will explain and take responsibility for our decisions and actions.
- **Commitment**: We will do what we say we will do.
- **Open and approachable**: We will work with others honestly and openly to achieve our objectives in ways that help them meet theirs.
- **Improvement**: We will continually strive to improve our performance in delivering National Park purposes.
- **Valuing and empowering our People**: We will value the people who work for us and will work to ensure that they are equipped and empowered to provide professional services to the public.

10.4 The Standards Committee has an important role in the ethical governance of the Authority. It promotes and maintains high standards of conduct by Members of the Authority and monitors compliance with the Authority's Code of Conduct for Members. It also deals with applications by Members for dispensations to speak, or to speak and vote, when they have a disclosable pecuniary interest. The Committee also has power to make recommendations to the Authority on issues of

Member conduct, where these arise out of its consideration of complaints or applications for dispensations.

10.5 There are three specific statutory Officer roles: the Head of Paid Service, the Chief Finance Officer, and the Monitoring Officer. The functions of those Officers and the relationship between Members and Officers are set out in the Member Officer Protocol.

10.6 Members need to seek, and to be satisfied with, assurance that the Authority is well governed. The Authority's accounts for each year contain an Annual Governance Statement which is drawn up initially for the Audit and Review Committee and then approved by the full Authority, and which presents an honest evaluation of the Authority's position in terms of governance, including identifying areas which need further work. This Annual Governance Statement is in turn based on a range of work by the Authority's external and internal auditors, the Audit and Review Committee, the Senior Management Team, and the Monitoring Officer who presents an Annual Governance Report to the Audit and Review Committee.

10.7 The Authority has adopted a role description for Members, the Chair of the Authority and Member Champions (**Appendices 1-3**).

11. Co-opted Members

11.1 The Authority has appointed two Co-opted Members to the Finance and Resources Committee. They do not have any decision making responsibilities but are expected to complement, inform and challenge the role of full Members. Further details of the purpose and key expectations of Co-opted Members is set out in their role description at **Appendix 4**.

Appendix 1

Role description - Members of the Authority

1. Purpose of the role

- To ensure that the National Park Authority fulfils the National Park purposes to the full and does so in the way that best suits the special characteristics of the National Park.

- To achieve the efficient, effective and accountable governance of the Authority in the best interests of the National Park and to provide leadership, scrutiny and direction for the organisation as a whole – balancing and integrating the environment, social and economic considerations and applying the principles of sustainable development.

- To work with the Chair, Chief Executive and other Members to discharge the functions of the Authority and to steer and champion the management of the Authority so that it delivers benefits to the nation and local communities in accordance with National Park purposes.

2. Key functions

- Act with independent judgement;
- Use individual skills, experience, and local, regional and national knowledge for the benefit of the Authority;
- Collectively participate in the development of policy direction, strategic thinking and innovation within the Authority, through the development of management policy, business plans and participation in the activities of the Authority's working groups;
- Independently scrutinise the workings and policies of the Authority;
- Be committed to working in the best interests of the National Park;
- Influence the Authority to help it come to informed and balanced decisions;
- Seek clarification of policy and action proposals if appropriate;
- Challenge proposals that exceed or go against the statutory purposes of the Authority;
- Accept collective responsibility for the decisions of the Authority;
- Approve and monitor programmes to implement the Authority's policies;
- Contribute opinions and advice from local, regional and national perspective;
- Represent the Authority's views as necessary to the press and media and play an ambassadorial role in promoting positive relationships with external parties and organisations.

- Help to promote the profile and effectiveness of the family of National Parks both through the work of the Authority and cooperative action such as peer support and peer review with key stakeholders/partners.

3. Expectations

- Attend and contribute to regular meetings of the Authority, its committees and working groups and raise issues of concern through the established procedures and mechanisms adopted by the Authority;
- Read and understand, and seek clarification of where necessary from Lead Officers, briefing material provided for meetings to ensure proper preparation for any debate on issues across the full range of the Authority's responsibilities;
- Champion and represent the Authority as an effective mechanism for promoting conservation of the Park's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, increasing public understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities and maintaining the social and economic wellbeing of local communities;
- Attend appropriate training courses, briefing sessions and events arranged or sponsored by the Authority and National Parks UK;
- Adhere to the standards of Conduct, Accountability and Openness of the National Park Authority, the Core Values and the Seven Principles of Public Life;
-

4. Opportunities

- To serve on committees and working groups dealing with particular issues affecting the National Park;
- To champion or lead a specific area of the Authority's work;
- To talk about the work of the Authority to local community groups;
- To learn about the National Park and other protected landscape matters on field visits and fact finding tours;
- To meet other people responsible for National Park matters.

5. Performance Measurement

The Government, with NPE, is working up ideas for measuring the effectiveness of Authorities and their individual Members. In the meantime, the following proxy measures provide a starting point for Members and others to gauge the contribution which they are making to the life of the Authority:

- Attendance at main Authority meetings; the measure being the % of full Authority meetings actually attended which that Member could have attended over a 12 month period.
  Target: at least 75% attendance at full Authority meetings in a 12 month period and be present for at least 75% of each specific meeting

Purpose: to monitor participation and commitment.

- ~~Representation of the Authority at approved external meetings and events.~~
  ~~**Purpose** to ensure an even distribution of workload, and to monitor this workload in line with 'reasonable expectations' of time commitment.~~

- Reporting back to the Authority following attendance at approved external meetings and events: the measure being the % of feedback provided by the Member following their attendance at external meetings and events over a 12 month period.
  Target: 100%
  Purpose: to monitor participation and commitment

Appendix 2

Role description - Chair of the Authority

1. Purpose of the role

- To champion the purposes of the National Park and provide dynamic and effective, strategic leadership in partnership with Members, the Chief Executive in the achievement of the Authority's statutory duties and relevant targets.
- To monitor performance and offer guidance and support to Members to ensure that the good public standing of the Authority is upheld, and to promote the professional development of Members so that they can carry out their role effectively.

2. Key functions

- Chair meetings of the Authority and ensure that standing orders and good practice are complied with at all Authority meetings.
- Represent the Authority at a national, regional and local level in its relations with key stakeholders and communities.
- Represent the Authority's views as necessary to the press and media and play an ambassadorial role in promoting positive relationships with external parties and organisations.
- Working with Members and the Chief Executive, ensure that the Authority's actions, decisions and use of resources are consistent with the purposes of designation and the legal responsibilities of the Authority.
- Act as a link between the Authority and the relevant Minister, national agencies and other National Park Authorities. Report, liaise and represent the Authority to Government and work with other National Park Authorities to influence national and regional policy.
- Assess Members' performance as appropriate and report to the Secretary of State and appointing authorities if required to do so.
- Be a member of the selection panel which makes recommendations to the Secretary of State on the appointment of new "national" Members to the Authority.
- Develop and maintain an effective working relationship with the Chief Executive providing support and guidance as necessary and acting as a bridge between Members and Officers.
- Monitor the welfare and performance of the Chief Executive and ensure there is an effective appraisal and development process in place.
- Foster the working relationship with all other UK National Parks and promote the interests of UK National Parks through organisations including National Parks England, the National UK Parks Chairs' Forum and National Parks Partnership Limited.

Appendix 3

Role description - Member Champions

1. Purpose of the role

- To support the achievement of the Authority's policies and objectives for that area of work. The exact way in which any Member Champion does this will depend on the individual Member and the particular area of work. Specific role descriptions apply to each Member Champion.

2. Key functions

- Represent and promote the area of work externally, including acting as a 'public face' of the Authority through the media;
- Support officers in the implementation of the Authority's policies, and the achievement of the Authority's objectives for that area of work;
- Assist officers in the formulation of new policy proposals before formal consideration by the Authority. They are expected to bring the wider `Members' perspective' to these discussions, and to seek early input from other Members when significant policy changes are being considered;
- Champion the service within the Authority, including introducing relevant reports that come to the Authority and its committees, or speaking first in the debate;
- Act as a 'critical friend' to officers and encourage improvement, for example in areas where the Authority may not be meeting its objectives or targets for the area of work;
- Participate in relevant 'performance reviews' instigated by the Audit and Review Committee;
- Report back to Members, including producing and presenting a written report each year to inform other Members of their involvement in the range of issues and activities within their area of responsibility.

Appendix 4

Role description - Co-opted Members

1. Purpose of the role

- Complement, inform and challenge - rather than replace - the role of appointed Members, who remain accountable to the Authority and are ultimately responsible for decision-making.
- Support good governance and broadening the range of voices involved in the debate about key issues.
- Co-optees may play specific roles and may be appointed because they have particular expertise or experience that is not well represented on the Authority by other means.
- Co-optees would also play an important role in advocating and championing the National Park, helping us to reach new, wider, and diverse audiences. Such an approach would run alongside existing consultative and engagement methods.

2. Key functions

- Participate in meetings of the Finance & Resources Committee and policy development forums
- Attend National Park Authority meetings and other member events
- Give presentations or specific inputs as requested to meetings, working groups or workshops
- Provide input and expertise to assist the Finance & Resources Committee in its work
- Adhere to and promote the Members' Code of Conduct to encourage the highest standards of behaviour in public office
- Represent and act in the best interests of the Authority and in accordance with the Authority's Standing Orders and other protocols
- Attend an annual meeting with the Chair of the Authority and Chief Executive to discuss their experience and performance
- Connect and champion the Authority and National Park in the wider community within and beyond the National Park's boundaries
- Champion diversity and inclusion
- Provide occasional updates on their experiences in the staff newsletter