Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 8**

30 September 2025

The Prioritisation of the National Park Authority work programmes for 2026/27

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek confirmation of the Authority's priorities for 2026/27, as the basis for setting the Authority's objectives and developing the draft budget.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members confirm the continuation of the prioritised list of programmes agreed in September 2024.

Strategic Framework

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

    - Corporate Plan objective 28. Plan and manage the Authority's work so as to make the most effective use of its resources.

Background

4. A robust system of prioritising the Authority's work programmes is a fundamental part of our business planning. Identifying the areas of work that are most important to us ensures that staff, partners and stakeholders are clear about where we will direct our efforts and helps guide the allocation of resources through the budget-setting process.
5. A fundamental review of priorities is carried out every 3 years. The most recent review was carried out in September 2024 and set the direction for the way in which the Authority's resources would be deployed for the following 3 years (2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28). We are now 6 months into the period. The next fundamental review is scheduled for two years' time.
6. Between the three-yearly fundamental reviews, we undertake an annual '**light touch**' review. This involves identifying any changes since Members made their last decision on priorities that are so significant that Members might want to reconsider the priority of one or more programmes.

Review of priorities for 2026/27

7. The current agreed priorities for 2025/26 are set out in the **Annex**.

8. There have been external changes over the last 12 months that may be relevant to the prioritisation of Authority work programmes.

    a. **Defra funding settlement.** The current 1-year funding settlement from Defra includes an additional capital grant, as outlined in the Authority's Budget Update 2025/26. This has eligible spend criteria in two streams: (1) innovation, investing-to-save and income generation and/or (2) delivery of '30 by 30' targets (protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030). There is a strong likelihood that this new emphasis on capital funding will continue.

    b. **National Park Management Plan.** The objectives in the National Park Management Plan for 2025-30 were adopted by members in June 2025, and the new management plan will be published later this year. The 2025-30 Management Plan places particular emphasis on wildlife and climate mitigation/adaptation.

9. Farm conservation, wildlife and woodland are already priority work programmes and are the main means by which the Authority will contribute to the achievement of 30 by 30 and the objectives for nature and climate in the 2025-30 National Park Management Plan.

10. The situation regarding Defra funding streams and criteria will be kept under review. We do expect to receive a 3-year funding settlement for 2026/27 onwards and this, together with the Government's decision on the balance between Capital and Revenue grant, may have a significant impact on our priorities. This will be considered again, if necessary, in next year's 'light touch' review of priorities.

11. Whilst no changes to the priorities are recommended now, Members are reminded that there will be a need to make significant changes to the objectives that those programmes are trying to achieve. The changes will be needed to reflect the wording of the new Management Plan objectives. Proposals will come to the Authority meeting in December.

Financial Implications

12. The priorities are used as a guide for decision-making. Any financial implications will be set out as part of the papers on the Authority's budget for 2026-27 onwards

Legal Implications

13. None.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

14. None.

Conclusion

15. The setting of consistent priorities over 3-year periods provides a clear framework for allocating our resources effectively, enabling the Authority to continue to perform well in those work areas that Members consider most important. No significant external factors have been identified that would require any further changes this year.

Kate Clark
Performance Management Officer

Prioritisation for 2025-26

‘Priority’ sub-programmes	
Education	Recreation & Health
Farm Conservation	Rights of way
Outreach	Wildlife
Planning	Woodland

‘Adequate’ sub-programmes	
Apprenticeships	National Trails
Archaeology	Planning Policy (Local Plan)
Barns & Walls	Recreation Management
Building Conservation	Tourism
Dales Countryside Museum	Volunteering
Dark Skies	Water Quality
Landscape Features	Youth Volunteering
National Park Management Plan	

‘Limited’ sub-programmes	
Car Parks	Minerals
Cultural Heritage	National Park Centres
Cycling Infrastructure	Natural Flood Management
Definitive Map	Public Transport
Enforcement	Sustainable Development Fund
Geodiversity	Toilets
Historic Environment Record	Traffic Management
Housing	

Note: sub-programmes are listed alphabetically within each category