Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 8**

Audit and Review Committee

25 November 2025

Review of Partnerships

Purpose of the Report

1. To report the outcome of the biennial review of the Authority's partnerships and seek Members' comments on the Authority's involvement in its range of partnerships.

Recommendation

2. That Members note:
    a. the revised list of strategic partnerships (Appendix B)
    b. the range and scale of current project partnerships (Appendix C)

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 30:
      Operate governance arrangements that are fit for purpose, as reported through the Annual Governance Statement and Report

Background

4. Many of the Authority's objectives can only be delivered through strong, supportive partnerships. However, partnership working can be time-consuming and resource intensive. So, it is vital that the partnerships in which the Authority is engaged are really contributing effectively to achieving the objectives set out in the National Park Management Plan, and our own Corporate Plan.

5. For the avoidance of doubt, the term 'partnerships' is used here in a non-legal sense and encompasses the following:
    a. groupings of organisations that meet regularly to discuss and/or make plans for matters of mutual interest ("strategic partnerships");
    b. groupings of organisations working together to deliver specific initiatives or large-scale projects ("project partnerships").

6. The Authority has long-standing procedures in place for managing the volume and nature of the 'partnerships' into which it enters, including the two-yearly review of the value of the partnerships with which we are currently involved.

Consideration

Strategic partnerships

7. **Appendix A** lists the 39 strategic partnerships with which the Authority is currently engaged. It provides: details of the partnership's representation and role; an assessment of the partnership's value (in terms of achieving National Park purposes and the associated duty); and an estimate of its cost (in time) to the Authority.

8. The current strategic partnerships commit the Authority to 337 FTE days per annum. This is a slight increase on 2023 (326 days). This increase is entirely in Member time (up from 41 days to 52 days).

Project partnerships

9. The development of project partnerships tends to be much more fluid than strategic partnerships, and several have come and gone since the last review in 2023. **Appendix B** lists the 14 current project partnerships, together with details of the partners, the project and the indicative annual value/costs to the Authority.

10. The current project partnerships are worth over £2 million per year. Almost £1.8 million of this comes from external funding, with the Authority contributing around £230,000 (in additional staff costs and/or direct funding). The most significant changes from two years ago are:
    a. The total project value, and Authority income, are both up by just over £500,000 – most of which relates to an increase in the amount of staff time devoted to implementing externally-funded projects;
    b. The Authority's net financial contribution to project partnerships has gone down slightly (by £20,000).

Financial Implications

11. There is a significant 'hidden' cost to participating in strategic partnerships – arising from the staff time involved. On the basis of the figures above, this equates to around £100,000 per year.

12. Project partnerships are an increasingly important source of funding for achieving the Authority's objectives, and are currently providing around £1.8million in external funding to the Authority.

Legal Implications

13. An assessment of the legal input required for a project partnership is made at project initiation stage to identify the legal documentation required. All projects should be undertaken in compliance with the guiding principles which include regulatory compliance to ensure adherence to Health and Safety legislation, environmental, cultural, and historical preservation laws and regulations.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

14. Equality Impact Assessments are completed where appropriate for project partnerships.

Human Resources Implications

15. Project partnerships place additional demands on Human Resources – as a result of the higher turnover of staff associated with often time-limited posts. The Authority is continuing to adapt to this way of working and has introduced a number of HR policy changes designed to increase flexibility.

Conclusion

16. Partnerships are an essential tool in delivering the Authority's objectives. In order for them to remain effective, they should be regularly reviewed in terms of their performance and cost.

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