Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 9**

Finance and Resources Committee

16 December 2025

12-Month Investor in People Review

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with an update on the 12-month review of the Authority's Investor in People (IIP) accreditation, following the Silver award achieved in 2024.

Recommendation

2. That Members note the update in relation to the Investors in People review, as set out in **Appendix A**.

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 31:Ensure that we have HR policies, procedures, terms and conditions to attract and support the right people with the right skills to deliver the Authority's work effectively, as evidenced by accreditation under the Investors in People (IIP) Standard.

Background

4. The Authority has been accredited against the We Invest in People Standard since 2001.

5. The full triennial IIP assessment was last undertaken in 2024, at which the Authority achieved the silver award level. As part of the scheme, annual reviews are undertaken at months 12 and 24.

12-Month Review

6. On 7 November 2025, Helen Burke, the IIP Assessor, met with SMT and Section Heads and a group of younger staff, as part of the 12-month review.

7. Following these meetings, Helen completed her assessment and submitted the final 12-month review report on 10 November. The report is included at **Appendix A**.

8. The review reflects on the progress made since our Silver accreditation and highlights key developments, including improvements in leadership visibility, staff recognition and internal communications. It also includes feedback from the Younger Staff Focus Group, offering valuable insights into how our values and behaviours are experienced across the Authority. This feedback provides a useful benchmark for how our organisational culture is embedding across different staff groups.

9. The report highlights areas of strength and provides recommendations for further improvement, particularly in relation to staff empowerment, recognition of high performance, and support for learning and development.

10. The 12-month review report has been shared with all staff.

Financial Implications

11. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any costs associated with implementing the recommendations from the review will be met from existing budgets.

Legal Implications

12. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

13. The IIP review process includes consideration of how inclusive and supportive the Authority is for all staff. Feedback from the Younger Staff Focus Group has provided insight into how inclusive practices are perceived and experienced.

Human Resources Implications

14. The review provides valuable feedback on the Authority's people management practices and highlights areas for further development.

Conclusion

15. The Authority remains committed to the Investors in People Standard as a framework for continuous improvement in how we lead, support and develop our staff. The 12-month review has provided useful insights and a clear direction for further progress ahead of the 24-month review.

16. The current action plan will continue to be implemented and a further action plan will be developed for 2026/27 to address recommendations and build on progress made.

Vikki Thomas
Head of HR

Appendix A

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®



Touch Point Summary for
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Practitioner: Helen Burke
Date: 7th November 2025

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Summary

On 7th November 2025, Helen Burke, Investors in People Practitioner, met with members of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Team via Teams. We reviewed what has happened since last year's Investors in People assessment, and briefly looked forward towards the next 12 months and beyond.

In line with your 'Statement of Youth Participation', a section of younger members of your workforce also discussed which aspects of the Investors in People framework they felt the Authority should give priority to moving forward.

This report summarises the key matters arising from these discussions.

What did we discuss?

Management Team Meeting

- **Context**
  - A 2025 Investors in People Action Plan had been developed internally, prioritising recommendations in your assessment report for immediate attention, alongside legislative changes you would need to embrace.

- **Changes and factors impacting the Authority over the last year**

  - Internal factors:
  - A fundamental review of the Authority's priorities and strategic planning, to align these with the available resources and wellbeing of your people. Amongst other things, this meant the scaling back of Programme Reviews to just two; Generation Green and Cautley Bridge.
  - The tabling of regular financial, HR, etc reports to Members, and confirmation that your internal Governance and controls remain effective, while also providing opportunities for further improvement.
  - Budget approval for 2025/26, balancing expected adjustments between Defra's core funding and Government capital grants, alongside proactive efforts to attract discrete project funding, underpinning the Park Authority's sustainability.
  - Launch of your new Communications Strategy to drive internal and external engagement.

- Formal launch of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan 2025-30, the Authority's ambitious Carbon Reduction Plan 2025-30 and your Youth Participation Statement, as well as submission of your Local Plan for 2025-40 for scrutiny by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government.
- Introduction of three new Board Members and two co-opted young Members to the Finance and Resources Committee.
- Investment in new Financial and SharePoint systems.

- External factors included:
- Continued uncertainty around Government's long-term direction and policy for National Parks, as it prioritises dealing with unexpected poor economic growth, housing demands and other challenges.
- Optimism that future funding arrangements might provide greater long-term planning opportunities, irrespective of the value of core funding, because of expectations that a 3- year indicative package will be available.
- Stronger partnership working, including relationships with North Yorkshire Council, Yorkshire Water and The Yorkshire Dales Millenium Trust.
- Allocation of funding to deliver quick turn-around projects, necessitating dynamic resource management and prioritisation.

- **Developments taken forward from your 2024 Investors in People assessment recommendations.**

- Facilitation of Action Learning Set type discussions at the start of some Section Heads' Meetings to help trigger ideas, problem solve and find solutions in a collaborative way that draws on people's different experience and perspectives. Recognition by doing this, that there is benefit all round from such conversations taking place although Managers may need to review how time is allocated for them.
- Delivery of Project Management training which provided a range of good resources but did not fully meet your needs, leading to decisions to both review your internal Project Management Framework, and bring delivery of future training in-house. This allows you to both bespoke the training, ensuring that it is fit for purpose, and show-case the skills and abilities of existing Project Managers.
- Supported a number of people interested in progression to access a Women Advancing in Leadership development programme.
- After reviewing the Terms of Reference for your Employee Voice Group, recognition that this has now served its purpose, leading to the introduction of a Teams Channel for staff suggestions and feedback. As a result, matters raised are now being dealt with by the right people be this organisation wide, or at a Directorate level.
- Review of the EDI Groups Terms of Reference leading to recognition of the value and contribution to be made by those with lived experience.
- Approaches to reviewing the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Group Terms of Reference continues as an integral part of the Staff Handbook annual review

but going forward, will include the views of other members on the group rather than just those of the person responsible for that section.

- Introduction of Civica 'applause' opportunities for peer to peer recognition which, as part of your suite of opportunities to recognise and thank each other, is landing well with many people. Evidence suggests that this is being used for behaviours as well as task-based thanks, with one person observing that it is particularly powerful when used on a cross-team basis.
- Continued to actively use other forms of recognition such as CEO emails, verbal thanks, etc while taking decision not to introduce a small team-fund for celebrations at this moment in time.
- Created opportunities for staff in Visitor Centres to come together on a team day related to their local area, in recognition that they are unable to get together on a regular basis because of their roles.
- Tried to position policy requirements e.g. around clocking in and out, overtime etc in a positive way that highlights the benefits to the individual of doing so and is part of your culture to value people.
- Undertaken a review of travel, accommodation and subsistence levels, alongside commissioning an independent, regional, pay benchmarking exercise, results of which are being finalised and will go to Members with a range of options for consideration. Following discussion, the matter will be brought back to staff with any changes hopefully being agreed for 2026/27.
- Updated a number of policies ahead of the Employment Rights Bill, including a stronger focus on behaviour and attitudes within the Probation Policy and transition of the staff induction process to online access, giving people discretionary access to information beyond what they need to know.
- Restructured one team to help create development and promotion opportunities, including being more deliberate about succession planning and how individuals with ambition and potential are upskilled.

- **People goals and priorities going forward**

  - Putting structures and strategies in place, informed by the Government's funding settlement and discussions on pay etc. to future proof the Authority for the longer term.
  - Paying careful attention to messaging and internal communications around these outcomes so that people are engaged, and come with you on your journey to the future.
  - Continuing to nurture a culture that recognises, appreciates and rewards people (in the widest sense of the word), engaging and sustaining them, and maximising opportunities to celebrate achievements.
  - Starting from the top, to continue developing people's leadership competencies.
  - Encouraging people to embrace learning and development, and providing opportunities to those with the motivation and ability to do so, to compete for career progression.
  - Continuing to raise awareness around a wide range of health and well being opportunities of both personal and work-related relevance, and the wider benefits package available to people.

- Identifying ways to be versatile and flexible in response to external funding opportunities.

- **Additional recommendations as a result of our discussions**

  - Try to ensure that the Action Learning type activities remain in-person, at least until they become really well embedded.
  - Continue to be creative in how you 'reward' people, driving efforts by what helps to motivate and engage them, and paying particular attention to the challenges posed by hybrid working, and certain role demands.
  - Consider how you can sustain momentum and visibility around the use of 'applause' and other forms of recognition so that people do not become complacent.
  - As leaders and managers, consider the preferences of your people as individuals and try to show recognition and appreciation in a way that meets their preferences, even when this might not be your own.
  - As per the original recommendations, succession plan the development of those who want to progress, equipping them to compete effectively with external applicants, as and when future vacancies arise.
  - Consider how you can help people to develop a 'change mindset' and be 'change ready' so that they can respond positively and in an agile way to new opportunities and project demands, as change is the only constant.

Younger Persons' Focus Group

- **Aspects of the Investors in People Framework that the Authority currently does well**

  - **Leading and Inspiring people** - visibility and accessibility of the CEO, Directors and Section Heads is seen as positive, particularly for those attached to one of your main offices where co-location at Colvend, visibility around Yorvale and in Section meetings, are all well received and encourage good relationships, trust and respect. CEO shadowing is strongly welcomed everywhere, with people finding members of the SMT personable and easy to relate to. CEO webinars and emails complement this, although in person contact for those working in more remote areas, tends to be more around marking the end of a project and so is less frequent.
  - **Living the organisation's values and behaviours** - the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority values are well explained and get good visibility during a new starter's induction, and during appraisal conversations, with the initial training that people receive also being seen as strong.
  - **Empowering and involving people** - the culture of the Authority is seen as one that trusts and empowers people, information is shared, teams work well together and individuals get positive encouragement and support which helps to build their confidence.

- **Managing performance** - people say that your process for measuring performance is a good one, where their objectives can be traced back up the golden thread to the Authority's priorities, and so everyone knows how they are contributing to your purpose.
- **Structuring work** - efforts to be flexible and retain good people by transferring them from one fixed-term project to another are appreciated, as is the openness show by SMT and Managers around the need to move to project based working and what is expected of people from this approach.
- **Building capability** - people recognise that they have access to lots of job-related training that helps them to stay safe and perform well in their role.

- **Aspects where things could be even better**

  - **Living the organisation's values and behaviours** - although at key milestones (induction and appraisal) the Authorities values are explained well and properly discussed, younger people feel that their visibility seems to go "into a void" between these times, and that they don't have the same visibility as in some other places. Making more overt reference to your values at other opportunities and possibly having an interim performance review conversation would help to address this. A mid-year review would also offer the opportunity for people to check back in with their manager in a structured and in-depth way, engage trainees who had started part way through the year, and discuss any mid-year actions for the corporate plan. A one-page template and 30 minute conversation was suggested as being appropriate.
  - **Empowering and involving people** - people enjoy meeting colleagues from other departments during full staff meetings but are mindful that nothing really happens afterwards as a result of this. They say that the level of cross-departmental contact an individual has is largely a product of the role they hold.
  - Although people recognise that at Section Head level there are likely to be meetings about what else is going on in other departments but people would be interested to know more about this and don't currently have a way of doing so.
  - **Structuring work** - changes arising from the move to project-based working can cause problems for some people working out in the Park because landowners do not understand the limits that it puts on individuals' autonomy and flexibility. It means that people can no longer be as responsive in addressing local issues brought to their attention causing individual frustration, and a feeling that they are no longer making the same difference by quickly solving landowners' problems.
  - The pace and volume of work is causing some people to feel fatigued, something that is aggravated by the short-term spending window for some projects and activities which mean that either people exhaust themselves, or other things get lost. A set of guiding principles for when objectives/ activities should come out of a programme in order to accommodate short term funding deadlines was suggested as a constructive way forward to mitigate staff burnout.

- By exception, one person's concern around the lack of trust implied by their need to complete flexi- time sheets was not shared by others in the group who accepted that this enabled them to log and access TOIL that they were due.

- **Building capability** - despite lots of training being available, discussions around ambition and career development leading to opportunities for developmental training and learning appear more readily available to some people than to others. This is an integral part of Trainee's development and while people accept that this is a shared responsibility, the attention placed on mandatory job-related verses developmental training, seems to vary considerably for non-trainees.
- **Delivering continuous improvement** - communication is something that is seen to have improved, although its timeliness is sometimes an issue because people are so busy.

- **Priority aspects of the Framework for attention over the coming year**

  - **Empowering and involving people** (Participating and collaborating) – creating opportunities for younger people to network internally and to share their experiences and views, alongside maximising youth engagement, focus group consultation and co-creation at an organisational perspective.
  - **Recognising and rewarding high performance** (Adopting a culture of recognition) – continuing to utilise a wide range of approaches to recognise people and to make them feel valued, while at the same time trying to ensure that reward is meaningful, sincere and proportionate. Younger people say that being told they have done a good job and someone going out of their way to bespoke a personal, specific thank you that acknowledges when they have gone above and beyond, has the most powerful impact. Similarly, the contrast between volunteer and employee long-service awards does not seem to place equitable 'value' on the commitment and effort of your permanent workforce.
  - **Building capability** (Understanding peoples potential & Supporting learning and Development) – ensuring equity in opportunities to discuss developmental learning, and access training or development on the back of this. Where affordable, it was suggested that external provision of the relevant training would denote an objective level of competence and build the individual's confidence more effectively than on the job training or shadowing.

What next?

You are due for your next assessment with us in October 2027.

As agreed I'll be in touch with you again next year to arrange another meeting to catch up.

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