

NPMP Steering Group Meeting
Wednesday 10 June 2020
10:30 – 12:30
Via video conferencing

Notes of meeting

Present:

Carl Lis - Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (Chair)
David Butterworth - Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
Adrian Thornton-Berry – Dales Rural Estates Network
Jane Langston – Eden District Council
Martin Christmas – Environment Agency
David Sharrod – YDMT
Jonathan Smith – Dales Tourism Businesses (Yorkshire)
Crispin Thorn – Forestry Commission
Paul Duncan – Natural England
Stuart Masheder – Natural England
Cllr. Richard Foster – Craven District Council
Neil Heseltine – Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Secretariat: Gary Smith, Peter Stockton, Josie Wilson, Sam Parfitt

1. Apologies

Lord Shuttleworth – Dales Rural Estates Network; Dan Hudson – South Lakeland District Council; Cllr. Richard Good – Richmondshire District Council; Anthony Bradley – Dales Farmer Network (Yorkshire); Jessica Goodfellow - Dales Tourism Businesses (Cumbria/Lancashire).

2. Annual Progress Report 2019-20

GS gave a powerpoint presentation covering progress on some of the key objectives last year. Overall, there had been significant positive progress on the majority of the objectives despite the impact of Covid 19 in the last few weeks of the year. The only objective where progress is well behind where we want to be is the one for new housing.

- It was noted that collecting data was challenging at the moment, so there were still a few gaps in the report.
- CT noted the forthcoming consultation of the English Tree Strategy and the developing work relating to the proposed Nature for Climate Fund.
- ATB commented on the challenges and safety risks for farmers and landowners dealing with the impacts of Chalara (ash dieback). CT confirmed that guidance was available but we need to make sure it is getting to the right people.
- On Dark Skies, JL noted that Energy Distribution companies were offering free LED lights for public spaces in Eden, and this might be more widely available.

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The draft report was approved, subject to adding any of the missing data.

Actions: *Secretariat to finalise the Annual Report and submit it to the National Park Authority meeting on 30 June.*

Secretariat to publish the final report and progress on every objective via the website

3. Ambitions for the 'Local Plan'

PS had provided the steering group with a paper before the meeting exploring options for the vision and strategic objectives for the new Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Plan ahead of wider public consultation later this summer.

- Anthony Bradley had given comments on this before the meeting which were shared with the steering group members.
- There was support for an ambitious objective on new housing, in particular looking at the scope for larger sites and developments on the edge of larger settlements around the boundary of the National Park.
- There was strong support for being ambitious on climate change. AT-B noted the potential value of Biodiversity Net Gain to support investment in natural capital within the National Park
- RF stressed the importance of FTTP broadband connectivity for all new housing.

Overall, there was strong support from the Steering Group for using the NPMP vision in the Local Plan, and for using the Local Plan consultation to have an “honest debate” in public on the reality of what’s needed to tackle the three challenges of housing, climate change, and the future of farming.

Action: *Secretariat to reflect on the Steering Group’s comments in putting together the final version for public consultation.*

4. Impacts of Covid-19 on NPMP objectives

GS gave a brief introduction and highlighted a few of the impacts:

- B5, B6 and B7 which involve direct engagement with young people and volunteering opportunities will all be badly affected this year.
- B11 – launch an annual farm and estate ‘open day’ programme – this has been postponed but hopefully will be launched next year.
- E2 – highly likely that tourism value will be down significantly this year and longer term picture is very uncertain.
- F3 – access to services – fear that Covid may be the final straw for some Dales pubs/cafes/retail outlets.

In discussion, Steering Group members identified the following:

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- A1 - NE has altered the way it is working but is still expecting to deal with the usual volume of new agri-environment scheme applications. AT-B noted that there were some problems with the way that NE was dealing with applications for peatland restoration (D3);
- E2 - financial impacts on pubs and local accommodation providers from loss of revenue due to shooting parties being cancelled, and similar impacts on the Estates; around 50% of shooting parties are normally overseas visitors;
- F2 - the potential benefits of a switch to home-working as a means to attract younger, working age people to move into the National Park.

It was noted that the NP had seen an influx of new and younger visitors during the 'lock-down'. This had created some positive opportunities to engage with new audiences but also seen some anti-social behaviour, notably littering, which had caused problems and concern in certain areas. In discussion, a number of different points were made, including:

- More information/education is required for first time visitors with regards to use of footpaths, open access, countryside code etc
- There were actually fewer visitors than normal. The problem was that – other than NPA car parks and toilets – no other facilities were open, so visitors were concentrated in fewer, and different, places than normal.
- The longer term need for more things for visitors – and younger residents - to be able to do (e.g. at sites like Threshfield Quarry).

It was suggested that it would be sensible to carry out a 'light-touch' review of the objectives in 2021, and this could take account of some of the impacts of Covid 19.

Action: Secretariat to agenda the light touch review of objectives for June 2021.

5. 'Very ambitious objectives'

In discussion, it was agreed that the 'very ambitious' objectives that would be considered at the next two meetings of the Steering Group would be:

- F1 – new housing – report to be prepared by the District Councils;
- D3 – peatland restoration – report to be prepared by the Yorkshire and Cumbria Peat Partnerships.

Action: Secretariat to agenda the reports and request input from the District Councils and Peat Partnerships.

6. Partner updates on objectives

A2 Dark Skies – bid for reserve status would be submitted in July. ATB agreed to provide a letter of support as the Yorkshire landowner rep on the Steering Group.

A3 Landscape Character Assessment – an interactive version will be available on the YDNPA website shortly.

A7 Landscape and cultural heritage - the 'Our Common Cause' project (led by Foundation for Common Land has secured £3m from the National Lottery to enhance the wildlife and heritage of Commons. Project includes 3 Commons in the Dales – Ingleborough, Brant Fell and Grassington Moor. A project officer will be appointed.

B2 Coast-to-Coast – DB reported that this was not currently a priority for Natural England. JS suggested there was a need for an audit of accommodation along the route, which is currently patchy.

C1 Nature recovery area – the Stage 2 bid has been submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the *Tees-Swale: naturally connected* project. Expect to hear at the end of June whether successful.

D2 New woodland – YDMT/YDNPA/Forest of Bowland developing a bid to National Lottery for a project to replace the loss of ash trees due to Chalara (Ash dieback).

D3 Peatland - warnings about fire risks, and possible water restrictions, due to the recent weeks of dry weather.

D7 Invasive species and disease – FC has published a range of information and guidance on Chalara.

Actions: *David Butterworth to contact Rishi Sunak about the Coast-to-Coast route.
Gary Smith to provide draft letters of support for the Dark Skies Reserve to
Adrian Thornton-Berry and Lord Shuttleworth.*

7. Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes were approved as a true record. GS noted that progress in commissioning data to measure progress on Objective F7 had been slower than hoped.

8. AOB

None.

9. Date of next meeting

Next meeting will be held in November 2020.

Action: *Secretariat to send a doodlepoll with suggested dates.*