

Date: 15 December 2020

Report: OBJECTIVES FOR 2021-22

Purpose of the report

1. To seek approval from Members for the Authority's objectives for 2021-22.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That Members confirm the continuation of the current set of objectives but with temporary amendments to objectives 10, 12, 13 and 14 to reflect the likely ongoing impact of Covid-19 on those areas of work involving direct contact with people.

Strategic Planning Framework

3. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:
 - **Corporate Plan objectives**
Objective 35: Plan and manage all aspects of the Authority's business so as to make the most effective use of our resources...

Background

4. In May, the Finance and Resources Committee agreed that the scheduled fundamental review of the Authority's priorities should be deferred until the outcomes of the Spending Review and the Government's response to the Glover Review were known. Given that neither has happened yet, the Authority's plans for 2021/22 will be based on the existing approved priorities (see **Annex A**). The first stage in preparing those plans is to agree the specific objectives that we will aim to achieve through our various work programmes. In turn, these will form the basis for developing the 2021-22 budget and detailed action plan.
5. Members will recall that a new set of objectives was agreed in December 2018, following the adoption of the National Park Management Plan 2019-24 (NPMP), and they are grouped under the NPMP's six 'ambitions for 2040'. In addition, there are a few objectives that relate to aspects of the Authority's own organisation and governance, and these are included in a separate section.

Consideration

6. The current 40 objectives are set out in the **Annex B**, with those that relate to the Authority's four priority programmes shown in bold. They remain up-to-date and properly representative of the breadth of the Authority's ambitions. At the date of writing this report, we do not yet have confirmation of the Authority's core grant funding for next year. However, whilst the long-term funding picture is uncertain, we are assuming that – at least for next year - we will be funded to a level that would not require the abandonment of any of the current objectives. However, there is one significant and obvious issue that Members need to consider: the impact of Covid-19.
7. A number of the objectives have been affected by Covid-19. In each case, the table in the Annex attempts to identify the scale of those impacts, breaking the objectives down into 3 categories:
 - a. those that have become a little more difficult to achieve but are essentially fine (green);
 - b. those that should still be achievable but where additional work will be (or has already been) necessary (orange)
 - c. those that have been seriously affected to the point where it is likely that they cannot be achieved next year (red).
8. Members will see that there are four objectives that have been seriously affected. Only one of these (No. 10) relates to one of the four priority programmes. It is proposed that these objectives be amended as follows for 2021-22 only:
 10. ~~By 2024~~ Provide **300** people from under-represented groups with activity days that enable them to access the special qualities of the National Park, and so increase their understanding, enjoyment, health and well-being
 12. Run a cohesive programme of inspirational, participatory activities that attract at least **3,000** people each year to find out more about the National Park's special qualities.
 13. Give people from all backgrounds an opportunity to enjoy and contribute to the National Park by providing at least **1,000** volunteer days per year, with 15% coming from under-represented groups.
 14. Work with organisers of large-scale events to ensure they are well run, benefit local businesses, and contribute to the maintenance of the National Park's natural capital, ~~for example funding the cost of maintaining the Three Peaks route.~~

Conclusion

9. Setting meaningful objectives is a critical part of the Authority's corporate management. Subject to the short-term amendment of four of them to reflect the ongoing impacts of Covid-19, the existing objectives remain relevant for 2021-22.

Gary Smith
Deputy Chief Executive

27 November 2020

CURRENT AUTHORITY PRIORITIES

'Priority' programmes	
Access for all	Land management and biodiversity
Development management	Rights of way

'Adequate' programmes	
Dales Countryside Museum	Landscape features
Development planning	Tourism
Historical environment	Volunteering and apprentices

'Limited' programmes	
Car parks and toilets	Sustainable development
National Park Centres	Visitor management

A distinctive living, working cultural landscape that tells the story of generations of people interacting with their environment

Objective	Impacts of Covid	Status
1. <i>During Brexit transition, support farmers and landowners to continue to deliver a range of public benefits through national agri-environment scheme agreements and similar initiatives, and monitor take-up.</i>	No significant impacts	
2. <i>Maintain the National Park as a place where a true sense of tranquillity, remoteness and solitude can be found, and by 2021 obtain Dark Skies Reserve status to enhance and promote enjoyment of its night sky.</i>	Dark Sky Reserve status secured. Implementation should be largely unaffected by Covid (other than dark skies events).	
3. <i>Use DCM and the Historic Environment Record to help local heritage groups to research, record and promote the stories of the National Park area, including completing the enhancement of the HER for the new area of the National Park by 2024.</i>	No significant impacts	
4. <i>Help local people to restore, repair and - where possible - bring back into use nationally-important historical sites, buildings and structures so that fewer than 4% of scheduled monuments and listed buildings are 'at risk' by 2024.</i>	No significant impacts	
5. <i>Deliver co-ordinated programmes of activity that enhance the distinctive landscape, geology and cultural heritage of the 'Ingleborough Dales' (by 2020) and the 'Westmorland Dales' (by 2023).</i>	Ingleborough Dales finishes in March. Programme for Westmorland Dales Scheme has been set back. Applied to NLHF to extend programme by 6 months (to December 2023).	
6. <i>By 2022, secure significant funding to repair, restore, and, where appropriate, find adaptive new uses for traditional field barns, particularly those in Swaledale, Arkengarthdale and Littondale.</i>	No significant impacts	

A friendly open and welcoming place with outstanding opportunities to enjoy its special qualities

Objective	Progress	Status
7. <i>Benefit a wide variety of users by raising the standard of all public rights of way so that 90% are 'easy to use' by 2023.</i>	No significant impacts.	
8. <i>Maintain and promote the Pennine Trails and other recognised long-distance routes, and campaign for the Coast-to-Coast footpath to become a National Trail by 2024.</i>	No significant impacts	
9. <i>Carry out works to improve access on appropriate public rights of way and established permissive routes so that 262km (10%) are suitable for users of all ages and abilities by 2024.</i>	No significant impacts	
10. <i>By 2024 provide 6,000 people from under-represented groups with activity days that enable them to access the special qualities of the National Park, and so increase their understanding, enjoyment, health and well-being.</i>	No progress 2020/21 - activity days had to be cancelled, and Covid is likely to limit what can be done in 2021/22 as well. The objective is cumulative so will be hard to make up (and depends in part on YDMT activity).	
11. <i>Through educational and skills-based activities, inspire 1,500 young people from in and around the National Park to explore and enhance their environment each year.</i>	Despite best efforts, likely to reach no more than 300 young people this year. Education Officer now appointed so – vaccine permitting – the target should be achievable next year, using 'virtual visits' if necessary.	
12. <i>Run a cohesive programme of inspirational, participatory activities that attract at least 4,000 people each year to find out more about the National Park's special qualities.</i>	Events programme cancelled for 2020. The October virtual Dark Skies festival was exceptionally well received and on the back of it we are expecting the February festival to go well too. However, likely that events will still be down next year.	
13. <i>Give people from all backgrounds an opportunity to enjoy and contribute to the National Park by providing at least 7,000 volunteer days per year, with 15% coming from under-represented groups.</i>	Most group volunteer activities have been cancelled but 1,200 individual volunteer days completed in first 9 months. We expect to run a programme on a similarly reduced scale in 2021.	
14. <i>Work with organisers of large-scale events to ensure they are well run, benefit local businesses, and contribute to the maintenance of the National Park's natural capital, for example funding the cost of maintaining the Three Peaks route.</i>	Most Three Peaks events cancelled (with consequent reductions in donations). Likely to be similar in 2021/22 unless there is widespread vaccination programme before the summer.	

15. Promote and encourage responsible cycling by supporting world class events that showcase the National Park, enabling the development of four ‘cycle hubs’, and creating at least one further family-friendly cycling route by 2023.	No significant impacts. Covid has heightened awareness of the value of outdoor recreation, which might boost potential for investment in cycling routes.	
16. Maintain ‘green lanes’ and, where appropriate, manage use by recreational motor vehicles, including enforcing any restrictions imposed by Traffic Regulation Orders.	No significant impacts.	

Home to the finest variety of wildlife in England

Objective	Progress	Status
17. 30% of the priority habitats outside nationally-designated wildlife sites are in good condition by 2024;	No significant impact.	
18. At least one landscape-scale ‘nature recovery area’ has been created by 2021.	Tees-Swale project launched and no significant impacts on the nature recovery aspects. Some delays though to the public engagement and training aspects of the programme.	
19. Work with farmers and landowners to achieve and maintain stable or increasing populations for 90% of priority species by 2026, including the UK ‘red-listed’ upland birds — for which the National Park is renowned.	No significant impacts.	
20. Work with farmers and landowners to improve the condition of the Aire, Eden, Lune, Ribble, Swale, Ure and Wharfe so that at least 90% of all rivers achieve ‘good ecological status’ by 2027.	No significant impacts	
21. Work with farmers in Wensleydale to demonstrate the benefit of ‘high nature value’, low-input farm systems through a 5-year trial of a ‘payment by results’ approach to agri-environment funding.	No significant impacts.	
22. Work with moorland managers and other key stakeholders to end illegal persecution of raptors, including independent and scientifically robust monitoring, and co-ordinated hen harrier nest and winter roost site protection.	No significant impacts	

Resilient and responsive to the impacts of climate change, storing more carbon each year than it produces

Objective	Progress	Status
23. Work with farmers and landowners to ensure that at least 70% of all woodland is in active management by 2023, including positive management of conifer plantations to increase suitable habitat for red squirrels and black grouse.	No significant impacts	
24. Support landowners to create at least a further 450 hectares of native broadleaved and mixed woodland that enhances the National Park's landscape by 2024.	No significant impacts	
25. Work with farmers and landowners to deliver landscape-scale natural flood management projects in the Aire, Eden, Ribble, Lune, Swale, Ure and Wharfe catchments.	No significant impacts	

Home to strong, self-reliant and balanced communities with good access to the services they need

Objective	Progress	Status
26. Encourage and facilitate high quality proposals for new housing in a range of tenures, sizes, types and prices, such that around 85 new dwellings are approved each year.	Some suggestion that Covid has slowed house-building, and presumably increased costs. Applications for new houses have dropped since March but there are several significant schemes in the pipeline.	
27. Undertake a 5-year programme of measures to promote the National Park as a place to live for younger, working age households (18-44) to help halt the decline in their numbers	Some evidence that Covid has increased the attractiveness of rural areas as a place to live and work, which may help to boost this objective?	
28. Use the Sustainable Development Fund and other funding sources, to support 20 new local projects each year that bring economic, social and environmental benefits to the National Park.	No significant impact on awarding grants – but potential delays in implementing some projects?	

Providing an outstanding range of benefits for the nation based on its natural resources, landscape and cultural heritage, which underpin a flourishing local economy

Objective	Progress	Status
29. Provide an efficient development management service, including ensuring that 65% of minor and 80% of ‘other’ planning applications are being determined within eight weeks and at least 80% of applicants are satisfied.	Significant short-term impact on capacity of the service. Longer term, Agile and other adaptations to working arrangements should ensure objective can still be achieved next year.	
30. Improve the quality, variety and marketing of the tourism ‘offer’ to encourage more overnight stays and more visitors in the quieter months, so that the value of tourism grows by at least 5% in real terms by 2024.	Likely to have been a significant negative impact in 2020-21 but probability that will bounce back next year with likely prevalence of ‘staycations’.	
31. Promote the National Park as a leading sustainable tourism destination, including enhancing the locations of 4 National Park Centres to create ‘visitor hubs’ that promote local distinctiveness and assist destination promotion.	As above – but Covid should have no significant effect on actually creating the visitor hubs themselves.	
32. Develop and promote new events, festivals and attractions based on the National Park’s special qualities and local distinctiveness so that at least 10% of visitors each year are coming for the first time.	Covid restrictions led to a significant increase in first time visitors during this summer.	
33. By 2023, provide at least 20 apprenticeships that focus on the skills that are essential to maintaining the National Park’s special qualities.	Covid restrictions are making day-to-day management of apprentices a bit harder but no reason to think that the objective cannot be achieved.	
34. Work with neighbouring authorities to produce a single, updated Local Plan for the whole of the National Park by 2023, which will help achieve the vision and objectives in the National Park Management Plan.	Covid caused some initial delay in the ‘options’ consultation, so running a few months behind original schedule – but no need to change objective. Note: bigger issue is potential impact of proposals in recent Government White Paper on planning	

An effective organisation, providing high quality services

Objective	Progress	Status
35. Plan and manage the Authority's work so as to make the most effective use of its resources, including generating sufficient income to maintain expenditure at the same level as 2014/15 in real terms across the extended National Park area.	No income target set for the year due to impact of COVID19. However, income has largely held up. Longer term risks of core funding cuts and reduced availability of e.g. NLHF grants?	
36. Provide high quality, efficient and effective services and communications to the public and other stakeholders, and so maintain the Customer Service Excellence standard every year.	Covid has affected short-term quality of some services but should not be any significant long-term issues.	
37. Operate governance arrangements that are fit for purpose, as reported through the Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Governance Report.	Covid has significantly affected governance (virtual meetings etc) but those new ways of working are all still compatible with the objective. Will be further reviewed overhauled as part of post-Covid working arrangements.	
38. Ensure that we have personnel 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 standard.	Covid has created the need for some new policies/procedures. Will need to be a further review as part of developing and implementing 'post-Covid' working arrangements.	
39. Provide facilities and IT systems that are fit for purpose and support the effective delivery of our services, as evidenced by the external auditor's annual 'value for money' opinion and internal audit's reporting on relevant systems.	Covid has created significant pressures on IT systems and premises, and these will be subject to further review as part of implementing 'post-Covid' working arrangements.	
40. By 2030, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our operations by at least 95% compared to 2005/06, and achieve annual carbon savings from woodland planting that we have funded of at least 30 times our residual annual emissions.	Short term positive impacts from significant reductions in work journeys and commuting. May be some potential future issues around e.g. difficulties with car-sharing; hot-desking etc.	