

**YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**ITEM 2**

Minutes of the meeting held at Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Officers, Yoredale, Bainbridge, Leyburn DL8 3EL, on Tuesday, 7 December 2021.

**Members Present:**

John Amsden, Nick Cotton, Richard Foster, Neil Heseltine, Julie Hutton, Carl Lis, Ian McPherson, Karin Sedgwick, Neil Swain and Derek Twine (in the Chair).

***COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK***

**36/21      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Kevin Frea, Stuart Parsons and Gillian Quinn.

**37/21      MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2021, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**38/21      PUBLIC QUESTIONS / STATEMENTS**

No public questions or statements had been received.

**39/21      DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING**

There were no declarations of lobbying.

**40/21      PROPERTY STRATEGY**

The Committee CONSIDERED the report of the Estates Manager.

In response to queries from Members, the Estates Manager:

- confirmed that the £276k of capital works referred to in paragraph 5 of the report includes the £74k reserve mentioned in that paragraph;
- advised that five of the sites previously earmarked for disposal in 2013 had not yet been disposed as no willing partner had been identified to take these on. If advertised for sale, the net sale proceeds were likely to be minimal or outweighed by sale costs, hence disposal was not a priority.

**RESOLVED** – to APPROVE the Property Strategy 2022 – 2027.

## **41/21      FINANCE PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee CONSIDERED the report of the Head of Finance.

Discussion included:

- DEFRA's agreement in principle, that part of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) funding announced for the first year of the three-year programme can be re-allocated to the remaining two years, was very much welcomed. It avoids losing part of this funding due to inability to spend it within the first year and recognises the shortened year - one timescale, caused by DEFRA's delayed announcement that FiPL was going ahead. Recruitment of staff to deliver FiPL couldn't commence until DEFRA had confirmed the project (July 2021), so there was some delay in getting the programme running at full capacity, whilst that recruitment took place. In addition, a number of individual grant proposals require input from specialist officers outside the FiPL team and on corporate administration roles, placing additional burdens on those staff and services;
- Some of the Westmoreland Dales projects are significantly behind profile with another two years of the project to run, and ongoing Covid issues may prevent some components being delivered, potentially resulting in loss of part of the grant. The Heritage Lottery Fund will only formally consider an extension to the project once the original timescale has come to an end – informally they have indicated they may consider a six-month extension. This is being monitored very carefully;
- The impact of the local government re-organisation in Cumbria and North Yorkshire on project delivery and funding will be carefully examined, as many current partners will no longer exist following re-organisation;
- Members approved the new format for this report.

The Committee NOTED the report.

## **42/21      INCOME GENERATION STRATEGY – PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Committee CONSIDERED the report of the Director of Conservation and Community.

The Chief Executive advised the Committee that the Authority has just signed a new contract with the Woodland Trust to deliver their 'Grow Back Greener' programme in the National Park. Up to £3.9 million of funding will be used to work with farmers and landowners to find sites for 240 ha of new native woodland, oversee the planting of those woodlands and then making sure that they are maintained for the first 5 years afterwards.

Negotiation of a contract with the White Rose Forest (Swale, Ure, Nidd and Ouse Woodlands) is continuing.

Members noted that challenges for delivering the diverse range of programmes include (for tree-planting programmes) a shortage of trees and – more generally - an off-putting level of bureaucracy for land-owners and farmers with some programmes, difficulties in recruiting staff, and pressures on existing staff, some of whom already had responsibility for a number of other projects. The nationally renowned expertise of some members of staff, with their membership of national bodies and requests for their advice and input, although highly commended, placed further demands on their time.

Members commended staff for their adaptation to the new forms of income generation and securing funding in challenging circumstances.

The Committee NOTED the report.

**43/21      FINANCIAL RESILIENCE ASSESSMENT**

The Committee CONSIDERED and NOTED the report of the Director of Corporate Services.

**44/21      BLENDED WORKING**

The Committee CONSIDERED the report of the Chief Executive.

Discussion included the benefits and disadvantages of blended working for both staff and Members, the different management skills required for managing staff remotely and consequentially the need for further training, savings made on costs such as reduced travel to meetings (now consolidated, following the widespread adoption of videoconferencing), and carbon emissions. It was acknowledged that blended working would not suit all staff, nor was it suitable for all roles. The move to blended working had been held up due to Covid and, until it could be rolled out fully, it was difficult to properly assess the impact.

The Committee wished the Chief Executive and staff well in the move to blended working and NOTED the report.

**45/21      STAFFING REPORT**

The Committee CONSIDERED and NOTED the report of the Head of Human Resources.

**46/21      SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT**

The Committee CONSIDERED and NOTED the report of the Senior Administrative Officer.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 12 noon.