

**Committee: FINANCE AND RESOURCES****Date: 24 May 2022****Report: VOLUNTEER RESOURCES ANNUAL REPORT****Purpose of report**

1. To provide information on the following during the year 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, covering:
  - Dales Volunteer recruitment activity and equal opportunities;
  - Dales Volunteer training and development; and
  - Dales Volunteer turnover and retention data.

**Recommendation**

2. That the report be noted.

**Strategic Planning Framework**

3. The information and recommendation contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework, and specifically Corporate Action Plan Objective 13, to "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".

**Diversity of our volunteers**

4. When volunteers join us they provide their date of birth and we also ask them to complete an equal opportunities monitoring form and state whether they consider themselves to have a disability. The latter two pieces of information are not compulsory and so, whilst most provide this, not all do. Together we use this data to understand the diversity within our current volunteers and to progress towards our targets of having 15% of our volunteer days completed by those who are in under-represented groups.
5. "Under-represented groups" means the following: young people (those aged 5 to 24 years inclusive), minority ethnic groups (all ethnic groups other than 'White – British'), or people who consider themselves to have a limiting long-term illness or disability.

6. Across our current volunteers:

16% are under 18 years old (these are our Young Rangers)  
3% in the age group 18-25  
2% in the age group 26-35  
4% in the age group 36-45  
8% in the age group 46-55  
24% in the age group 56-65  
43% are over 65 years of age  
In addition, 3% disclosed that they have a disability

7. 97% stated that they were of 'White' ethnicity, whether that be 'White-British', 'White-English', 'White-Scottish', 'White-Welsh', 'White-Irish' or 'White – other', with 3% from BAME groups.

### **Recruitment Activity**

8. In the year from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 we recruited 65 volunteers. This compares to 22 in the year 2020/21. The new recruits were:

13 Learning and Engagement volunteers  
12 Up Skill Down Dale volunteers  
10 DCM dialect project volunteers  
8 Trees and Woodlands volunteers  
5 Meet and Greet volunteers  
3 Walling (South) volunteers  
3 DCM volunteers  
2 Bee survey volunteers  
2 Ranger (West) volunteers  
2 Tees Swale Natural Capital volunteers  
1 Young Ranger Leader (South)  
1 Ranger (South) volunteer  
1 Ranger (North) volunteer  
1 Bird survey volunteer  
1 Dormouse monitoring volunteer

### **Equal Opportunities Monitoring**

9. The monitoring of applications for the purpose of equal opportunities is a practice recommended by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. This is an important tool to enable the Authority to ascertain at an early stage whether or not there appear to be any areas of its work from which certain disadvantaged groups are excluded. This monitoring provides evidence as to whether or not current recruitment practices and role offers are reaching the full spectrum of possible candidates and also helps us to avoid possible future problems of allegations of discriminatory practices.

10. Completion of monitoring forms is not compulsory, and non-completion does not invalidate an application. Therefore, not all applicants complete the form fully, or at all. The evaluation of these forms provides an insight into the demographic of people applying to volunteer. From the information we do have, concerning successful applications in 2021/22:

0% of applicants were under 18 years old (excepting 'Young Rangers')  
14% in the age group 18-25  
9% in the age group 26-35  
8% in the age group 36-45  
17% in the age group 46-55  
28% in the age group 56-65  
25% over 65 years of age  
5% of applicants disclosed that they have a disability

11. 97% of applicants stated that they were of 'White' ethnicity, whether that be 'White-British', 'White-English', 'White-Scottish', 'White-Welsh', 'White-Irish' or 'White – other'. 3% were from BAME groups.

### **Training and Development**

12. All new volunteers complete our National Park Awareness training, provided through full day face-to-face sessions. We also offer a shorter online version of the course for those volunteers who will just be doing a small number of days volunteering with us (and so for whom a full day of training would be disproportionate).
13. We have now established fortnightly online 'Admin Induction' sessions, held alternately in the early evening and in the day. Volunteers sign up to this as soon as they can upon joining, so that we know that they have all the basic information they need on things like health and safety, claiming expenses etc.
14. We still face a backlog in terms of delivering first aid training, because the social distancing measures which we were obliged to follow during the Covid-19 pandemic limited the numbers we could put through each session. We have booked additional sessions this year so by Autumn the backlog should be cleared. The same applies to navigation training.
15. It is the responsibility of the volunteer supervisors to determine what additional training beyond the core National Park Awareness and Admin Induction is needed for each role. The Volunteer team work with the supervisors to deliver this training, via a mix of courses, shadowing, briefings and information packs, both in house and via external providers.
16. This coming year we are revisiting the competency framework for the volunteers, because the number of opportunities we offer has increased as has the flexibility in the system to undertake more roles. These changes have increased the complexity of the training we offer, which is no longer the same for all volunteers. We will undertake a review to ensure that a) all volunteers have the required competencies for each role; and b) that our handbook, profiles and on-line volunteer management system ('Better Impact') mirror these requirements. We have already started this work with the Ranger and Learning and Engagement teams and plan to complete this across all other teams before the end of the year.
17. As part of the above review, we will also be looking to identify whether, subject to resources, we can offer more training to more volunteers, as we know that learning new skills is a key motivator. We will also consider whether any

efficiency savings can be made across our training provision (such as online, delivering alongside other things etc.)

### **Volunteer Turnover**

18. Some degree of volunteer turnover is inevitable. It is also desirable: the influx of new people can generate new ideas and fresh ways of thinking. Historically we have seen a high degree of loyalty from our volunteers: 5% of our current volunteers have been with us for over 20 years and a further 21% for between 10 and 20 years. This means just over a quarter of our current volunteers have been with us for over 10 years. This number has been relatively consistent year on year.
19. During the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, 38 volunteers resigned, 2 passed away and 4 moved away from the area. The length of service of the 44 people who stopped volunteering in 2021/2022 is shown below:

<b>Length of Service</b>	<b>Number of leavers</b>	<b>As a %</b>
<1 year	1	2%
>1 year but < 2 years	3	7%
>2 years but < 3 years	4	9%
>3 years but < 4 years	9	20%
>4 years but < 5 years	9	20%
>5 years but < 10 years	4	9%
>10 years but < 20 years	10	23%
>20 years	4	9%

20. More volunteers left us this year than last (25 in 2021/22) but it is hard to infer any longer-term trend because of the disruptive effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Feedback from Leavers**

21. We send an online survey to volunteers when they leave; it is not compulsory that they complete it, with 3 leavers providing feedback this year. The feedback was positive, saying they had enjoyed their time volunteering, meeting new people and learning new skills. As is typical, most responses cited the reason for leaving as being less able to undertake physically-challenging activities.

### **Conclusion**

22. The Authority is managing its Volunteer service in an effective way.

**Sally Robertshaw**  
**Volunteers Development Officer**

6 May 2022