YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY	**ITEM 7**
Date:	**20th September 2022**
Report:	**YDNPA Housing Statement**

Purpose of the report

1. To agree an Authority statement on housing in the National Park.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the Authority:
   a) Agrees the draft statement in the annex as the Authority's broad position on housing; and
   b) Assists local partners to develop a programme of measures to reduce the number of 'under-occupied' properties in the National Park.

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
Objective 35: *Undertake a 5-year programme of measures to promote the National Park as a place to live for younger, working age households (18-44), including identifying measures to reduce the proportion of under-occupied properties*.

Background

4. The National Park Authority is not a local housing authority and has no statutory responsibility for building or funding housing. It is however the local planning authority, which means that it prepares the Local Plan and determines planning applications that have an impact on the supply of housing. The Authority is also part of the partnership of local organisations that prepare the National Park Management Plan, which includes a range of shared community-related objectives that are the responsibility of the constituent local authorities.

5. The Authority has not previously summarised its ambitions for housing. Instead our various polices, aims, targets and objectives for housing are spread across the National Park Management Plan, the Local Plan, and the Corporate Plan.

6. As part of the current Local Plan review, Members held two Policy Development Forums in November to discuss a range of housing policy issues, including the impact of second homes and holiday letting on the Park. These discussions provided officers with guidance for then formally setting out the Authority's 'Preferred Options' for the emerging Local Plan, including the proposed use of permanent occupancy clauses.

7. As part of the policy discussions, Members also indicated support for the recommendation of the North Yorkshire Rural Commission that the new Unitary Council should investigate charging a levy to discourage further growth of second homes. There was also apparent support for some form of communication strategy to encourage second home owners to make their property in the National Park their primary residence. Members also asked if anything else could be done to reduce the proportion of long-term empty properties, and a number of Members indicated support for measures to restrict further growth in the number of holiday letting properties.

8. Finally, Members asked that the Authority bring together and publish a broad statement of its objectives around housing. This proposal was subsequently included in the Action Plan for 2022-2023, which was approved by the Finance and Resources Committee in May.

Consideration

9. Setting out an Authority statement on housing should be beneficial for future partnership working with the new North Yorkshire and Westmorland & Furness Unitaries and Lancaster City Council. It could assist in lobbying for improved housing outcomes in the Park. It should also be helpful in supporting the Authority's position at the Local Plan examination and with future reviews of the National Park Management Plan.

10. Officers have now looked at all the Authority's adopted and emerging policies and distilled these down into a summary statement that sets out what it is trying to achieve through its planning role for housing in the National Park (see **annex**).

11. Officers propose that a more detailed programme of practical measures aimed at reducing under-occupied properties could then be developed in parallel with the establishment of the new unitary authorities next year. This could include encouraging second home owners to move to the National Park permanently.

Conclusion

12. The availability of affordable housing remains a critical issue for the future viability of communities in the National Park. Whilst the primary responsibility for

delivering on the community objectives set out in the National Park Management Plan rests with our local authority partners, the Authority has an important supporting role – setting the policy framework through the Local Plan and adding our weight to the work of our partner authorities to build more affordable housing and to bring more under-occupied properties back into residential use.

Peter Stockton
Head of Sustainable Development
5 September 2022

Annex

YDNPA Statement on Housing

The purposes of the National Park Authority are;

> **• to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the national park;**
>
> **• to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public.**

The landscape has been home to people and industry for thousands of years, and the National Park Authority, therefore, also has an additional duty:

> **• in taking forward the two national park purposes, [to] seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities.**

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan is the overarching strategy for delivering the purposes and the duty. The Management Plan is prepared by a Steering Group of public, private and voluntary sector organisations, and representatives of local businesses. The Plan sets out a shared 40-year vision for the Park, which includes an ambition that the National Park should be:

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

And this is supported by a specific objective for housing:

> ***F1. Support the completion of 400 dwellings in a range of tenures, sizes, types and prices by 2024*.**

The Authority's role in housing

The Authority has a legal duty to work with developers, housing authorities and rural housing providers to support the social and economic wellbeing of local communities. The Authority does not build, manage or finance housing but it does identify sites for future development which support public and private infrastructure such as schools, retail services and communications and which indirectly support community sustainability. The Authority is directly responsible for preparing the Local Plan and making decisions on planning applications.

Planned housing growth

Within the Yorkshire Dales National Park land for development is precious and sites for new housing are in short supply. The Authority needs to carefully plan and release suitable sites to ensure good outcomes for the Park and its communities.

Making better use of the existing stock

In addition to building new homes, the Authority wants to see better use made of the existing stock. There are more than 13,000 dwellings in the National Park for a resident population of only 24,000 people. So, on the face of it, there are more than enough houses. However, low levels of occupancy and high levels of holiday homes mean that the existing stock is grossly underused. In 2011, 2,700 houses, (21%) of the Park's stock, were second homes, holiday lets or vacant dwellings. By 2017 this had risen to an estimated 3,500. The equivalent national figure was 4% in 2011. It is likely that the 2021 Census will show a continuing trend of very high levels of under occupancy in the National Park.

We want to see:

1. Sufficient numbers, types and tenures of new housing built that will maintain services, support the economy and start to reverse population decline

This is the key Local Plan objective. Evidence indicates that at least 50 new homes will be needed each year to meet local housing need and attempt to stabilise population decline.

2. As much new affordable housing as possible to meet the need to live in the Park

Increasing the amount of affordable housing is critical to community and economic viability. Development that does not contribute meaningfully to that goal is, therefore, of limited value in the National Park. Affordable homes will be provided on allocated housing sites beside open market homes, and on 'rural exceptions sites' on the edge of towns and villages.

3. Houses in the right place

Housing growth will continue to be focused in the larger, more accessible towns and villages where services are concentrated but there will also need to be scope to respond to local needs in the smaller villages.

4. Housing of the right size and standard

The National Park needs new homes that are attractive for family living but it also needs flats and shared accommodation that meet the needs of smaller, elderly and younger households. New homes should have amenities such as garden space, high quality broadband, mobile signal connections and electric vehicle charging.

5. Greener homes

New homes should be comfortable, energy efficient and affordable to heat. They should be designed to adapt to the changing climate. New homes will need to comply with or exceed national building standards which over time will ensure that all new housing will achieve low carbon emissions and deliver more in terms of biodiversity.

6. Fewer under-occupied houses

The Authority wants to see more of the existing houses in the National Park being lived in permanently. All new housing should be restricted to permanent occupancy to prevent it being lost to second homes or holiday letting.

7. More efficient use of existing buildings

The Authority will support appropriate conversion and re-use of existing buildings which will also conserve heritage, landscape character and minimise carbon emissions. It will encourage sub-division of large properties for multiple occupation and shared living, in particular by the young and the elderly.

8. Greater diversity in housing delivery

As well as small builders, the Authority is keen to work with a wide variety of housing providers. The Authority would like to see more schemes coming forward from housing associations, local housing authorities, rural estates and community housing groups.