YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY	**ITEM 9**
Date:	**20 September 2022**
Report:	**FARMING AND LAND MANAGEMENT POLICY WORKING GROUP**

Purpose of the report

1. To seek approval to change the current operation of the Authority's Future of Farming and Land Management working group.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That Members retain the 'Future of Farming and Land Management' working group but it meets only when there are substantive new policy issues for it to consider.

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:

    - ***National Park Management Plan objectives***
      By 2022, develop a locally tailored, locally delivered, outcome-focused environmental land management scheme to maintain, restore and improve the outstanding natural capita and rural heritage of the National Park

Background

4. The 'Farming and Land Management Policy' working group was established in 2017. It was originally intended to be a 'task and finish' group to assist the Authority in developing a local approach to supporting farming and land management in the Yorkshire Dales National Park post-Brexit (as part of a wider NPE proposal to support farming and land management in National Parks). It was hoped that this work would influence the development of the, then nascent, national Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes.

5. Work on the local proposal was completed in 2018. Since then the remit of the group has evolved through several reviews. The most recent, approved by the Authority in September 2020, concluded that the group should continue to meet regularly for a further two years.

6. The group's current remit is to:

a. keep abreast of national developments on the future of farming as they impact on the National Park Authority's statutory purposes and, contribute responses to national and local proposals in line with Authority policy;

b. advise on implementation of the agreed strategy on the Authority's role in providing information to, and communicating with, the farming and land management community and the wider public during the transition towards the new ELM scheme.

7. The group's current composition is: -
   - Neil Heseltine – Chair of the Authority
   - Mark Corner – Member Champion for the Natural Environment
   - Derek Twine – Member Champion for Cultural Heritage
   - Allen Kirkbride
   - Robert Heseltine

Consideration

8. The working group has met 8 times since the last review. These meetings have provided updates to the Members on upland farming and agri-environment schemes nationally, regionally and within the Yorkshire Dales. This includes initiatives that the Authority's farm team have been directly involved with, such as: *Farming in Protected Landscapes*; *Catchment Sensitive Farming*; *Payment by Results*; the Raydale Project; *Tees-Swale: Naturally Connected*; and, *Our Upland Commons*.

9. Whilst the Group has been a useful vehicle for sharing information, there has been little need, or opportunity, for it to directly shape the Authority's policy or its input to national consultations – as Defra has moved from designing to starting to implement elements of the national ELM schemes. This has included the introduction of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (which – for the first time – allows some local tailoring of support for farming and land management in the National Park).

10. At the most recent meeting of the Working Group, Members proposed that the regular meetings could now be put into abeyance but the group should remain extant to meet on an ad hoc basis if and when there are substantive new policy issues that need detailed consideration prior to coming to the Authority. In the meantime, updates on national agri-environment developments could be provided via email.

Conclusion

11. Over the past two years there has been little for the working group to contribute to directly. Nonetheless, the group has developed expertise in what is a complex agenda. Whilst it is proposed to cancel regular meetings of the working group it would be sensible to retain it in the form outlined above.

Adrian Shepherd
Head of Land Management
5 September 2022