

**YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE**

ITEM 2

Minutes of the meeting held at the YDNPA offices, Yoredale, Bainbridge, Leyburn DL8 3EL on Tuesday 12 July 2022 at 10:30am.

Members Present:

Mark Corner, Liz Hall, Robert Heseltine, Sandy Lancaster, Ian Mitchell, Jim Munday (in the chair following his election), Andrew Murday and Yvonne Peacock.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

10/22 ELECTION OF CHAIR

Jim Munday was nominated for the position of Chair of the Committee. Following a brief election address,

RESOLVED –

That Jim Munday be elected Chair of the Audit and Review Committee, to hold office until the first Committee meeting following the annual general meeting of the Authority in 2023.

JIM MUNDAY IN THE CHAIR

11/22 ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR

Mark Corner was nominated for the position of Deputy Chair of the Committee. Following his election address to Members,

RESOLVED –

That Mark Corner be elected Deputy Chair of the Audit and Review Committee, to hold office until the first Committee meeting following the annual general meeting of the Authority in 2023.

12/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Richard Good, David Ireton, Allen Kirkbride and Lizzie Bushby.

13/22 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2022, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

14/22 PUBLIC QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS

No notifications of public questions or of the intention to make a statement had been received.

15/22 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

No declarations of lobbying were made at the meeting.

16/22 REVIEW OF AUTHORITY PERFORMANCE IN 2021-22

CONSIDERED – the report and presentation of the Deputy Chief Executive, who corrected a typographical error in his report at paragraph 7a) which should read £440,000 not £4400,000.

Discussion included the following:

- In response to Member queries, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that work was underway (led by the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust) to recover plastic tree-guards once no longer needed. Trials were ongoing to find suitable alternative materials to plastic for tree guards;
- There was some concern expressed about how insensitive tree planting could detract from the landscape, as well as impact adversely on other species. The Deputy Chief Executive advised the Committee about the rigorous process which the Authority undertakes prior to funding any woodland planting, to ensure “the right tree in the right place”. Tree planting is an essential flood mitigation measure and increasing tree cover is a critical part of Government’s policy to tackle climate change;
- The potential impacts of outside investors looking to buy land for carbon-offsetting;
- Grassland, properly managed, was also a recognised valuable carbon sink;
- In response to Member queries, the Director of Park Services advised that there were no imminent plans to revert to charging for use of toilets. Car-parking charges had been increased by 20p, to reduce lost revenue. All the pros and cons of reintroducing charges for toilets would be considered as part of the planning for next year’s budget;
- It was anticipated that future income streams would continue to be more project-based, and that the core DEFRA grant would not increase. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the Authority was currently reaching its capacity in terms of being able to manage additional projects. However, there are projects in development that will hopefully replace the current projects as they come to an end. The Finance and Resources Committee receives a regular progress report on activity to support future income generation;
- The cost of living crisis and increased fuel costs may lead to reduced visitor numbers to the National Park. Visitor numbers are regularly monitored – figures up to Easter this year were slightly above the ‘normal’ level for that time of year;
- There was a request to add time taken to close planning enforcement cases to the Annual Planning Performance Summary in future reports. It was noted that Members had decided in September that Enforcement should not be one of the Authority’s priority programmes, and that we would only be doing the minimum necessary to meet our legal duties;

- It was disappointing to hear that the percentage of SSSIs in the National Park in good condition was not improving, and that this included the small area of SSSIs within the YDNPA's ownership;
- Members were pleased to note the progress made on the restoration of bridges following flood damage in 2019;
- The overall performance in 2021–2022 had been excellent.

RESOLVED – to NOTE the Authority's performance in 2021-22

17/22 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2022-23

CONSIDERED – the report of the Director of Corporate Services and the internal auditors, Veritau.

Ian Morton from Veritau advised the Committee how the proposed topics for the Internal Audit Plan had been selected, taking into account past audits and assurance levels, risks, knowledge of issues occurring in other National Parks and discussions with senior staff to propose areas which would add most value to the Authority.

RESOLVED -

To approve the proposed Internal Audit Plan for 2022 – 23

18/22 TREASURY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE 2021-22

CONSIDERED and NOTED – the report of the Treasurer.

19/22 EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

CONSIDERED – the report of the Director of Corporate Services and the Auditor's Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2021.

Members were pleased with the overall opinion. In response to Member queries, the Director of Corporate Services advised the Committee that the additional audit fees claimed by Ernst & Young were moderated by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd and that although he was expecting the final figure to be below that which Ernst & Young had claimed, indications were that Local Authorities' auditors' fees would rise significantly in the future.

The Committee NOTED the report.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 11:45am