

Date: 13 December 2022

Report: YDNPA OBJECTIVES FOR 2023-24

Purpose of the report

1. To seek approval from Members for some initial changes to the Authority's objectives for 2023-24.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That Members confirm the intention to continue with the current set of objectives but with the amendments set out in the **Annex**.

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 objectives**
Objective 34: Plan and manage all aspects of the Authority's business so as to make the most effective use of our resources...

Background

4. In advance of developing a detailed budget for the year ahead, we usually ask Members to confirm the specific objectives that we will be aiming to achieve through our various work programmes. Most of these objectives are taken directly from the National Park Management Plan 2019-24 (NPMP), and are grouped under the NPMP's six 'ambitions for 2040'. In addition, there are a few objectives that relate to aspects of the Authority's own organisation and governance.
5. Members will recall that we are projecting a budget shortfall in each of the next three years. At the moment this is estimated to be £250k rising to over £900K by 2025-26. However, this is a quickly shifting agenda and our financial situation may be worsened once we are clear as to the impact of the Chancellor's Autumn statement on the Authority's finances over the coming years. Depending on the scale of any cuts, this may necessitate Members having to further revise or remove some of the current objectives for next year.
6. In the meantime, it is helpful to start to rationalise the list of objectives, so that we provide a more realistic work programme and public expectation of what can be achieved by the Authority.

Consideration

7. The current 39 objectives are set out in the **Annex**. Putting aside financial constraints, the objectives have also been assessed in light of:
 - **Objectives already completed.** Three of the objectives (Dark Sky Reserve, apprentices; woodland creation) have already been achieved. Given the extent of the external funding that the Authority has secured for the latter, it is proposed that a new objective is set.
 - **Objectives that are now unachievable.** There are currently 5 objectives that are not 'on course' (report to Audit and Review Committee, 8 November). Of these, four are now thought to be unachievable (habitats; species; woodland management; and tourism).
 - **Significant new areas of work.** There are no significant new areas of work that would require new objectives.
8. The proposed changes to the objectives are shown in the **annex**, together with a brief explanation in each case.

Conclusion

9. Setting meaningful objectives is a critical part of the Authority's corporate management. The Authority's continuing success in securing new funding has meant that we have been able to hold on to most of our objectives despite a lengthy and continuing period of real-term cuts to our core funding. However, that is no longer sustainable and it is possible that proposals to further cut back some objectives may come to Members as part of the proposals for the 2023/24 budget next year. In the meantime, a decision today will help to set the initial framework for developing next year's work programmes.

Gary Smith
Deputy Chief Executive

28 November 2022

A distinctive living, working cultural landscape that tells the story of generations of people interacting with their environment

- 1. During Brexit transition, support farmers and landowners to continue to deliver a range of public benefits through national agri-environment scheme agreements and similar initiatives, including the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.**
2. Maintain the National Park as a place where a true sense of tranquillity, remoteness and solitude can be found, and ~~by 2021 obtain~~ **retain** Dark Skies Reserve status ~~to enhance and promote enjoyment of its night sky.~~¹
3. Deliver co-ordinated programmes of activity that enhance the distinctive landscape, geology and cultural heritage of the 'Westmorland Dales' by **the end of 2023.**²
4. By 2024, secure significant funding to repair, restore, and, where appropriate, find adaptive new uses for traditional field barns, particularly those in Swaledale, Arkengarthdale and Littondale.
5. Help local people to restore, repair and - where possible - bring back into use nationally-important historical sites, buildings and structures so that fewer than 4% of scheduled monuments and listed buildings are 'at risk' by 2024
6. Use DCM and the Historic Environment Record to help local heritage groups to research, record and promote the stories of the National Park area, including completing the enhancement of the HER for the new area of the National Park by 2024.

¹ The original objective has been achieved. The National Park was designated as an international Dark Sky Reserve in December 2020.

² A six-month extension to the programme has been agreed with the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

A friendly open and welcoming place with outstanding opportunities to enjoy its special qualities

- 7. Benefit a wide variety of users by raising the standard of all public rights of way so that 90% are 'easy to use' by 2023.**
- 8. Run a cohesive programme of inspirational, participatory activities that attract at least 4,000 people each year to find out more about the National Park's special qualities.**
- 9. Carry out works to improve access on appropriate public rights of way and established permissive routes so that 262km (10%) are suitable for users of all ages and abilities by 2024.**
10. By 2024 provide 5,000 people from under-represented groups with activity days that enable them to access the special qualities of the National Park, and increase their understanding, enjoyment, health and well-being.
11. Through educational and skills-based activities, inspire 1,500 young people from in and around the National Park to explore and enhance their environment each year.
12. 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.
13. Work with organisers of large-scale events to ensure they are well run, benefit local businesses, and contribute to the maintenance of the National Park's natural capital - for example, funding the cost of maintaining the 'Three Peaks' route.
14. Maintain 'green lanes' and, where appropriate, manage use by recreational motor vehicles, including enforcing any restrictions imposed by Traffic Regulation Orders.
15. Maintain and promote the Pennine Trails and other recognised long-distance routes, and ~~campaign for~~ **implement** the Coast-to-Coast path ~~to become~~ **as** a National Trail **through the National Park** by 2024³.
16. Promote and encourage responsible cycling, enabling the development of two 'cycle hubs', and **working with local Highway Authorities and other partners to undertake the work necessary to develop** ~~creating~~ at least one further family-friendly cycling route by 2024⁴.

³ The Government confirmed in August that the Coast-to-Coast route would become a National Trail, with enhancements to the route to be completed by 2025.

⁴ The Authority agreed in June to work with local partners to try to take the next steps towards creating a multi-user route along the disused railway line between Garsdale Station and Hawes.

Home to the finest variety of wildlife in England

~~17. 30% of the priority habitats outside nationally designated wildlife sites are in good condition by 2024.⁵~~

18. Deliver a co-ordinated 5-year programme of investment to support nature recovery through the *Tees-Swale: naturally connected* programme, and identify other potential landscape-scale ‘nature recovery areas’.

~~19. Work with farmers and landowners to achieve and maintain stable or increasing populations for 90% of priority species by 2026, including the UK ‘red-listed’ upland birds — for which the National Park is renowned.⁵~~

20. Work with farmers and landowners to improve the condition of the Aire, Eden, Lune, Ribble, Swale, Ure and Wharfe so that at least 90% of all rivers achieve ‘good ecological status’ by 2027.

21. Work with moorland managers and other key stakeholders to end illegal persecution of raptors, including independent and scientifically robust monitoring, and co-ordinated hen harrier nest and roost site protection.

Resilient and responsive to the impacts of climate change, storing more carbon each year than it produces

22. Work with farmers and landowners to deliver landscape-scale natural flood management projects in the Aire, Eden, Ribble, Lune, Swale, Ure and Wharfe catchments.

23. Through Grow Back Greener and other local funding programmes, support farmers and landowners to create at least a further 450 225 hectares of native broadleaved and mixed woodland that enhances the National Park’s landscape by 2024²⁵.⁶

~~24. Work with farmers and landowners to ensure that at least 70% of all woodland is in active management by 2024, including positive management of conifer plantations to increase suitable habitat for red squirrels and black grouse.⁷~~

⁵ As reported previously, neither of these objectives is achievable. A draft of a new Nature Recovery Plan was agreed with local partners in June, and will be used to set new objectives for 2023 onwards

⁶ The original NPMP objective has long since been exceeded. In advance of the next NPMP, it is proposed to adopt an interim target that focuses on the Authority’s direct contribution to woodland creation.

⁷ As reported previously, this objective will not be achieved (the area in management has now fallen back to 60%). Responsibility for delivering this objective lies primarily with the Forestry Commission, and the Authority is not in a position to make any significant contribution to improving the situation.

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

- 25. Encourage and facilitate high quality proposals for new housing in a range of tenures, sizes, types and prices, such that around 85 new dwellings are approved each year.**
- 26. Undertake a 5-year programme of measures to promote the National Park as a place to live for younger, working age households (18-44) to help halt the decline in their numbers.**
27. Use the Sustainable Development Fund and other funding sources, to support 20 new local projects each year that bring economic, social and environmental benefits to the National Park.

Providing an outstanding range of benefits for the nation based on its natural resources, landscape and cultural heritage, which underpin a flourishing local economy

- 28. Provide an efficient development management service, including ensuring that 65% of minor and 80% of 'other' planning applications are being determined within eight weeks and at least 80% of applicants are satisfied.**
- 29. Work with neighbouring authorities to produce a single, updated Local Plan for the whole of the National Park by 2023²⁴, which will help achieve the vision and objectives in the National Park Management Plan.⁸**
- ~~30. By 2023, provide at least 20 apprenticeships that focus on the skills that are essential to maintaining the National Park's special qualities.⁹~~
31. Develop and promote new events, festivals and attractions based on the National Park's special qualities and local distinctiveness so that at least 10% of visitors each year are coming for the first time.
32. Improve the quality, variety and marketing of the tourism 'offer' to encourage more overnight stays and more visitors in the quieter months, ~~so that the value of tourism grows by at least 5% in real terms by 2024¹⁰.~~
- ~~33. Promote the National Park as a leading sustainable tourism destination, including enhancing the locations of 4 National Park Centres to create 'visitor hubs' that promote local distinctiveness and assist destination promotion.¹¹~~

⁸ The publication version of the Local Plan will go out to consultation in 2023 but the subsequent Public Inquiry means the Plan will not now be adopted until 2024.

⁹ The objective will have been achieved by March 2023.

¹⁰ The impact of Covid (tourism value is now 13% less than the 2017 baseline), combined with the current cost of living increases, mean that there is no realistic prospect of achieving the planned levels of growth.

¹¹ Two visitor hubs have been completed, and the remaining signage at Hawes and Aysgarth will be completed this winter, so the objective will have been achieved by March 2023.

To be a highly effective organisation that delivers quality services and is widely recognised for its expertise in National Park policy, practice and partnership-working

34. Plan and manage the Authority's work so as to make the most effective use of its resources, including generating sufficient income to maintain expenditure at the same level as 2014/15 in real terms across the extended National Park area.
35. Provide high quality, efficient and effective services and communications to the public and other stakeholders, and so maintain the Customer Service Excellence standard every year.
36. Operate governance arrangements that are fit for purpose, as reported through the Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Governance Report.
37. Ensure that we have HR policies, procedures, terms and conditions to attract and support the right people with the right skills to deliver the Authority's work effectively, as evidenced by accreditation under the Investors in People standard.
38. Provide facilities and IT systems, including blended working, that are fit for purpose and support the effective delivery of our services, as evidenced by the external auditor's annual 'value for money' opinion and internal audit's reporting on relevant systems.
39. By 2030, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our operations by at least 95% compared to 2005/06, and achieve annual carbon savings from woodland planting that we have funded of at least 30 times our residual annual emissions.