

**Committee:** FINANCE AND RESOURCES

**Date:** 30 May 2023

**Report:** VOLUNTEER RESOURCES ANNUAL REPORT

### **Purpose of the report**

1. To provide information on Dales Volunteer (DV's) those volunteers who are directly recruited, trained and supervised by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and resources during 2022/23.

### **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:

*"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".*

### **Recruitment Activity**

4. Each year recruitment decisions are based on need. We review volunteer numbers against Volunteer Supervisors future plans and our objectives, to determine if we need more to cover retirees who are leaving and/or expand the team.
5. For the period 2022/23, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (Authority) recruited 31 new volunteers. This compares to 65 in 2021/22. They were in the following areas:

11 Learning and Engagement Team	1 Our Uplands Common project
8 Up Skill Down Dale Programme	1 Work Placement
3 Plant Monitoring	1 DCM
2 South Ranger Led Team	1 Bird Surveyor
1 North Ranger Led Team	1 Historic Environment
1 Tees Swale Natural Capital project	

## **Equal Opportunities Monitoring**

6. The monitoring of applications for the purpose of equal opportunities is a practice recommended by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. 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. We are considering adding a statement in our role adverts, in line with the one used for staff, to outline our commitment to improve the diversity of volunteers.
7. 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. From the information we have, concerning successful applications in 2022/23:
  - 0% of applicants were under 18 years old (excepting 'Young Rangers')
  - 30% in the age group 18-25, this is a 16% increase from the previous year.
  - 30% in the age group 26-35, this is a 21% increase from the previous year.
  - 0% in the age group 36-45
  - 7% in the age group 46-55
  - 20% in the age group 56-65
  - 10% over 65 years of age
8. There has been a notable increase in the numbers of those aged between 18 and 36 who have applied to volunteer, presumably in part due to the Up Skill Down Dale Programme. There has been a reduction in the numbers of those aged over 35 applying to volunteer based on previous years' applications.
9. In relation to disability, 5% of applicants disclosed that they have a disability in 2022/23. This is the same as in 2021/22. With regard to ethnicity, 83% of applicants stated they were of 'White' ethnicity, ('White-British', 'White-English', 'White-Scottish', 'White-Welsh', 'White-Irish' or 'White - other'), 7% preferred not to say. No one was from BAME groups, this is a decrease from 6% in 2021/22.

## **Diversity of our volunteers**

10. We use data provided by the current volunteers to understand the diversity within our teams and to progress towards our targets of having 15% of our volunteer days completed by those who are in under-represented groups. "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. The current profile across our 405 volunteers is:
  - 14% are under 18 years old (these are our Young Rangers)
  - 5% in the age group 18-25. This is a 2 % increase from the previous year.
  - 4% in the age group 26-35. This is a 2 % increase from the previous year.
  - 3% in the age group 36-45
  - 7% in the age group 46-55
  - 24% in the age group 56-65
  - 43% are over 65 years of age

4% disclosed that they have a disability, this is an increase of 1% from the previous year.

95.4% stated they were of 'White' ethnicity, ('White-British', 'White-English', 'White-Scottish', 'White-Welsh', 'White-Irish' or 'White – other'), 1.4% preferred not to say. 3.2% of our volunteers are from BAME groups.

## **Training and Development**

11. All new volunteers complete the Authority's National Park Awareness training, provided through 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 for whom the full training would be disproportionate).
12. We have now established fortnightly online 'Admin Induction' sessions, held alternately in the early evening and in the day. Upon joining Volunteers sign up to this as soon as possible, so that we know that they have all the basic information they need on things like health and safety, claiming expenses etc. It is the Volunteer Supervisors' responsibility to determine the additional training needed for each role, beyond the National Park Awareness and Admin Induction. The Volunteer team work with the supervisors to deliver this training, via courses (both in house and with external providers), shadowing, briefings and information packs. The backlog for First Aid and Navigation training, which developed during Covid, has been cleared. We now offer 4 options for DV's to update their qualification each year. DV's who cannot make one of these options, will not be able to continue in their role until they undertake the required course.
13. Last year we reviewed the competency framework for the volunteers – the number of opportunities we offer has increased so too has the flexibility to undertake more roles. These changes have increased the complexity of the training needs, which is no longer the same for all volunteers. Our handbook, profiles and on-line volunteer management system ('Better Impact') shows these requirements. This review has highlighted a number of roles where supervisors require slightly differing competencies for seemingly similar roles, so this coming year we will look at ensuring consistency across these areas.

## **Volunteer Turnover**

14. 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: 7% of our current volunteers have been with us for over 20 years and a further 18% for between 10 and 20 years. This means a quarter of our current volunteers have been with us for over 10 years. This number has been relatively consistent year on year.
15. During the period 2022/23, 18 volunteers resigned, 1 passed away and 4 moved away from the area. These numbers are back to the year on year 'average' levels of retirement, it was higher last year, which we attributed to the effect of Covid. The length of service of the 18 people who stopped volunteering in 2022/2023 is shown below:

<b>Length of Service</b>	<b>Number of leavers</b>	<b>% of leavers</b>
<2 year	3	17%
>2 years but < 5 years	5	28%
>5 years but < 10 years	7	39%
>10 years but < 20 years	2	11%
>20 years	1	6%

16. We believe we are beginning to see a reflection of the wider societal changes affecting volunteering. Despite taking on new volunteers to replace those who are retiring our volunteering day numbers are remaining relatively stable. This is likely to be attributed to the fact that many of our older volunteers have tended to contribute a high number and consistent level of volunteering days for many years and those who are replacing them don't view volunteering in the same way. Our new recruits are, mainly younger and our roles now more flexible, designed to fit the lifestyle of those who have other responsibilities e.g. work or family commitments. This means that whilst our volunteer team is expanding year on year, the number of days they do is not increasingly proportionally.
17. We have recently reviewed and found a number of volunteers who are registered with us, but have done very little volunteering. We are seeking to understand the reasons for this - where they do not wish to continue with us, removing them from our records could increase the retiree numbers significantly for 2023/24. It will however mean the data we hold is more accurate, and reflect the number of volunteers actually volunteering.

### **Feedback from Leavers**

18. We send an online survey to volunteers when they leave; it is not compulsory that they complete it. Two leavers provided feedback this year, both cited the reason for leaving as being less able to undertake physically-challenging activities.

### **Conclusion**

19. The Authority actively manages its Volunteer service to ensure it is effective. It also ensures equality of opportunity, with volunteering roles covering a variety of work programmes.

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12 May 2023

### **Background papers**

none