

**Committee:** FINANCE AND RESOURCES

**Date:** 30 May 2023

**Report:** ACTION PLAN 2023/24

### **Purpose of the report**

1. To seek Members' approval for the detailed programme of activity that the Authority plans to undertake in 2023/24 to achieve the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan.

### **Recommendation**

2. That Members approve the attached Action Plan as the basis for managing the Authority's day-to-day work in 2023/24.

### **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**  
Plan and manage the Authority's work so as to make the most effective use of our resources, including generating sufficient income to maintain expenditure at the same level as 2014/15 in real terms across the extended National Park.

### **Background**

4. The specific objectives that the Authority is trying to achieve were agreed at the Authority meeting on 13 December, and were subsequently set out in the published [Corporate Plan 2023-24](#). Members will recall that most of the objectives are taken directly from the [National Park Management Plan 2019-24](#).
5. The Action Plan sets out in more detail what we are planning to do, and by when, to make progress on those objectives this year. It is a 'public document' but it is not written with the public as its primary audience. It is an *operational* document that is used by managers to plan and manage day-to-day, and it is updated during the year. As reported to Members at the last Finance and Resources Committee, as part of implementing the new Income Generation Strategy we will need to be more flexible in the application of the Action Plan. As we 'add' new actions when new funding is secured, we will inevitably need to amend, cancel or postpone some existing actions

to create delivery capacity. As a result, the specific actions set out in this Plan are very likely to change but not the corporate objectives they underpin.

### **Action Plan for 2023/24**

6. The initial Action Plan for 2023/24 is set out in the **Annex**. The objectives relating to the Authority's six priority areas of work are highlighted (in green). Any actions postponed from 2022-23 are marked with a red (p). Those that have been outstanding for longer than a year are marked accordingly.
7. Members will already be aware that this programme of work (£10.8m + £1m of works carried over from last year) is ambitious compared to the £10.5m programme completed in 2022-23). Members' attention is drawn to the following priority areas of work:
  - a. **Farm conservation** – directly supporting high nature value farming, including: providing at least £1.2m in grants through the national *Farming in Protected Landscapes* programme; and running the *Catchment Sensitive Farming* programme to reduce water pollution (1.1-3; 19.1-4);
  - b. **Planning** – continuing to provide a high-quality service, including exceeding all the Government's performance targets; and improving the speed of decision-making (26.1-10);
  - c. **Planning policy** – making significant progress towards a new Local Plan for the whole Park, making final decisions on new housing sites and publishing the 'publication' version of the Plan; (27.1-10);
  - d. **Recreation and health** – a range of measures to broaden the opportunities for people to access the Park for health, including running a range of inspirational events to engage people with this special place (8.1-4);
  - e. **Rights of way** – an extensive programme of works to maintain and improve the opportunities for physical access within the National Park, including replacement signage and new surfacing (7.1-7).
  - f. **Wildlife** – supporting the new unitary councils to produce their statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategies; and investing directly in habitat restoration through the '*Tees-Swale: naturally connected*' programme, and the two quarry Natural Environment Funds (17.1-10; 18.1-4).
8. Members should be aware of four other factors influencing the scale and breadth of this year's Plan:
  - a. The need to boost earned income, and create the time to develop new externally-funded projects in order to achieve our objectives in the face of continuing reductions in the value of our core grant.
  - b. Small cuts already made to a handful of programmes (Building Conservation; Development Management; Sustainable Development Fund; Trees & Woodland; Wildlife) to help balance the 2023/24 and future budgets;
  - c. The further work necessary to identify longer term, structural budget savings that are required;

- d. The continuing move towards becoming a more 'project-based' organisation, with more direction from central government.

## **Conclusion**

9. The Action Plan for 2023-24 represents another ambitious programme of investment into the Yorkshire Dales National Park. More than ever, the Authority will need to be flexible in its approach to the detail. Taking opportunities to generate income that will enhance or expand our ability to deliver our objectives will inevitably mean that some planned actions will have to be changed, delayed or even cancelled altogether. These will be reported to Members, as appropriate, during the year.

**Gary Smith**  
**Deputy Chief Executive**

11 May 2023