

25 March 2025

Member feedback and Member Champion report - Sustainable Development

Purpose

1. To provide feedback from meetings attended by Members as representatives of the National Park Authority since the last Authority meeting.

Recommendation

2. That Members consider and note the reports from the Authority's representatives.

Background

3. Members represent the Authority on a wide variety of Partnerships and, in order to keep Members and Officers updated on this representation, formal reports are brought to each Authority meeting.
4. Member Champions are also engaged in a wide range of activities and take turns in bringing annual reports to Authority meetings.
5. These formal reports provide the opportunity to update Members on the work of the various partnerships we are involved with, a chance to question Member representatives and Champions and a means by which we can continually assess the value of these partnerships and Champion roles.
6. The **Appendices** include:
 - 1) A list of Partnership meetings attended in the last quarter (**Appendix 1**);
 - 2) Reports from the relevant Partnership meetings (**Appendix 2**);
 - 3) The annual report of the Member Champion for Sustainable Development Management (**Appendix 3**).

Rebecca Eslick
Committees Officer

List of Partnership Meetings December 2024 – March 2025

Title	Member	Date	Attended	Report
1. Campaign for National Parks	M Corner	19/01/2025	Yes	See Report
2. National Parks Management Plan Partnership	Chair	21/01/2025	Yes	See Chair's Report
3. National Parks England	Chair	29/01/2025	Yes	See Chair's Report

Report on Partnership Meetings

Campaign for National Park's Council meeting and AGM

I attended CNP's Council meeting on 29 January in London. The theme of the meeting was 'Reimagining National Parks'; considering priorities for reform to guide CNP's advocacy and campaigning in the coming years, particularly with regard to making NPs wilder and for social justice. Though the focus of the meeting was on the medium term, the live issues of the underfunding of National Park Authorities and the implications of current planning and farming policy provided an uneasy context.

The Minister for Nature, Mary Creagh MP was due to speak but sent her apologies, sending a rather vague letter to the meeting affirming that the government recognises the value of National Parks and Landscapes, mentioning that the government is committed to revamping the governance of NP's and in building a package of measures off the back of the Landscapes Review. Speaker Guy Shrubsole, author of 'Lie of the Land' shared his views on creating wilder National Parks, including the perceived benefits of increased public ownership. Mary-Ann Ochota, broadcaster and author, discussed renewal of the social contract including the challenge of people now knowing about or understanding National Parks and the need to build ecological literacy, starting with children.

Table discussions indicated a common wish to see legislative reforms to deliver wilder NPs and a renewed social contract. Changes to the governance of NPAs, including having a mix of members more representative of the nation, was also a common theme.

The AGM review of the year highlighted CNP's success in securing the 'seek to further duty' within the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act. A positive piece of news was CNP's victory in the legal case taken against government for not discharging this duty in a case about a car park, where the government stepped back on the matter before it got to court. Publication of the Health Check Nature Recovery report was another highlight.

Looking ahead, CNP's priorities are:

- Pursuit of the new duty on public bodies, including a legal fighting fund;
- Opportunities for governance reform, purposes, secondary regulations, water campaigns;
- National marine parks;
- New Perspectives (including a new leader's event at Malham in April).

Mark Corner
Member Champion for the Natural Environment

Annual Report of the Member Champion for Sustainable Development

Local Plan

The Local Plan made progress though more slowly than perhaps anticipated.

- The Local Plan Advisory Group completed consideration of all the Local Plan housing sites in June, following consultation No6 in 2023 about initial options.
- A final informal public consultation was held during September and October. The purpose was to make the final list of preferred sites public and invite any final comments.
- Members then considered the report of consultation and approved the final list of sites at the December Authority Meeting. The sites will be sufficient for 369 dwellings by 2040 with a mixture of affordable housing for rent and purchase, and market homes. The market homes will be a range of sizes and types and will be restricted by Planning condition to permanent occupancy only, to prevent new dwellings from simply becoming more second homes or holiday lets. The objective is that a wider range of new housing will help sustain a living/working community.
- The full draft Local Plan is now expected to be published for formal consultation in March. Dozens of maps and a number of evidence documents supporting the Local Plan are currently being finalised in time for publication.
- Following publication, officers will report any formal representations to Members. Depending on the outcome of Publication the Authority may be able to start giving weight to some of new Local Plan policies as early as June 2025.
- I have responded to numerous press enquires around objections to some of the housing sites and participated in interviews, including regional television news.

Change to National Policy

Housing targets for Local Authorities have increased dramatically. North Yorkshire and Westmorland and Furness have seen some of the biggest increases in the country. However, the significant uplift in numbers does not affect the National Park directly because Government recognises it is not a logical place for major housing growth. Instead, NPAs are working to assess their own targets in discussion with neighbouring authorities.

Neighbourhood Plans

The Clapham neighbourhood Plan passed its examination in the Autumn and officers are now working with North Yorkshire to move the Plan on to local referendum and then adoption.

Annual Report on the Sustainable Development Fund

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) budget for 2024/2025 was £115,000. To date we have managed to offer grants to 17 projects with a total value of over £95,000.

This year the Authority's Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) includes a 12-month pilot focusing on benefitting younger people (defined as those under the age of 30). £30k of this year's SDF budget has been ring-fenced for such projects. The pilot will be reviewed at the end of the 12-month period to consider progress and outcomes. To date 7 out of 17 projects directly relate to young people. The total value of projects that directly link to the initiative is currently £34,558.

Member involvement in SDF events and promotion included:

- On 27 May 2024 Libby Bateman represented the Authority at the opening event of Howgill Village Hall's new extension. This project is a couple of years old and has been a slow burner. The SDF contributed £9,999 towards the upgrade of facilities to include disabled access and a new extension incorporating a kitchen. A number of other funders also contributed to the makeup of funding to make the project happen.
- In June 2024, I represented the Authority at the celebrations following a series of improvements including a new kitchen and toilet at St Michael and All Angels Church in Linton. The SDF contributed £7,500 towards the project.
- On 22 March 2025 there will be an open gathering to celebrate the completion of the new accessible entrance extension at Settle Drill Hall. The Trustees of 1st Castleberg (Settle) Scouts have invited myself and the Chair to attend the event. The SDF contributed £20,000 towards the project.
- On 12 April 2025 there will be a celebration at St Oswald's Church in Askrigg following restoration works to the Church tower. The Chair has agreed to represent the Authority at this event. The SDF contributed £10,00 towards the project.

Richard Foster
Member Champion Sustainable Development