

25 March 2025

Authority response to draft National Park Management Plan 2025-30

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval for the key points to be raised in the Authority's response to the draft set of objectives for the National Park Management Plan 2025-30.

Recommendation

2. That Members approve the points listed in paragraph 10 as the basis for the Chair and Chief Executive to feedback to the other members of the Partnership.

Strategic Framework

3. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and support the strategic planning framework:
 - Corporate Plan Objective 29:
"In partnership with key organisations, and in consultation with local communities and visitors, update the National Park Management Plan (NPMP) by 2025, giving priority to tackling the climate and nature emergencies".

Background

4. The National Park Management Plan is the single most important document for the management of the National Park. It guides the work and plans of a range of organisations and provides the framework for a number of other key strategy documents, including the Local Plan.
5. Responsibility for the preparation and monitoring of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Management rests with the National Park Management Plan Partnership, which is made up of the bodies and representatives of local businesses that play the biggest role in helping to achieve the objectives set out in the Plan (see <https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about/national-park-management-plan/partnership/>).
6. The review process undertaken by the Partnership has included the following stages:
 - a. Initial public consultation on the most important issues that the new Plan would need to tackle;
 - b. Compilation and publication of detailed 'Evidence Reports', setting out the latest facts and figures, relevant policies, and challenges and opportunities for each of the 6 ambitions in the Management Plan;

- c. Holding the NPMP Annual Forum to get the initial views of local partner organisations on the priorities for the updated Management Plan.
 - d. Setting up 6 expert 'drafting groups', including representatives from key partner organisations and youth representatives, to suggest a new set of objectives for each of the ambitions.
 - e. Consolidation and adjustment of the suggested objectives by the NPMP Partnership.
7. In January, the Partnership published its proposed set of objectives for consultation (<https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about/national-park-management-plan/partnership/the-new-management-plan-2025-2030/>). The primary audience for that consultation is the many bodies and organisations that operate within the National Park, and which we hope will contribute to the achievement of the objectives. However, the consultation has also been promoted to the wider public through social media, press releases etc.

Consideration

8. Whilst the Plan is – rightly – put together by a broad coalition of partners, it is ultimately the Authority's statutory responsibility to adopt it, and it will drive almost everything that the Authority will do over the next 5 years. It is, therefore, vital that the Authority has a strong input to shaping the final document.
9. The Authority is represented on the Partnership by the Chair and Chief Executive. The Authority's views have also been fed into the objectives by Member Champions and officers directly involved in the drafting groups.
10. On 4 March, a Policy Development Forum meeting was held to give Members an opportunity to identify whether there were any remaining significant issues or concerns about the draft Plan. During the course of the Forum, a number of detailed points were raised and discussed (see the **Annex**). On the basis of that discussion, it is proposed that the Authority make the following general points to the Partnership:
- a. The sections covering each of the six ambitions should be re-ordered so that those on nature and climate come first;
 - b. Consideration should be given to re-ordering the objectives within each section to give prominence to those that are most [significant?].
 - c. The importance of including references in relevant objectives to tackling deprivation, as the latter will be a key driver for future Government funding;
 - d. Seek to retain the ambition – particularly for nature and climate – rather than giving in to the current shortage of necessary funding.
 - e. Where objectives stretch beyond 2030, it needs to be clear – for monitoring purposes - what the Partnership expects to have achieved by 2030.
11. There was also some discussion about draft objective B1 (rights of way), and whether resources should be moved away from maintaining the overall network in good

condition and directed towards trying to increase significantly the length of routes that are more accessible for people with a diverse range of ages and abilities.

12. At present, 260km (10%) of the rights of way network are considered to be more accessible (known as 'Miles without Stiles'). A commitment to a significant percentage increase (e.g. by 5%) would equate to an additional 130km needing to be improved or enhanced for accessibility. In doing so, this would likely impact on the management and maintenance of the wider rights of way network for which the Authority has delegated statutory highway duties.
13. Making rights of way more accessible is covered by draft objective E3 ("Creating 5 new 'access for all' trails") and F6 ("create at least two new multi-user routes by 2030").

Financial Implications

14. None. Work is currently underway to assess the broad costs of achieving each of the proposed objectives, and the scale of any current shortfall in the funding needed.

Legal implications

15. The Authority is required to adopt the final Management Plan (June Authority meeting) under s66 of the Environment Act 1995. Both the preparation and the implementation of the Management Plan are covered by the duty (s245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act), which requires all public bodies and statutory undertakers (including the Authority itself) to seek to further National Park purposes when carrying out their functions in relation to the National Park. It introduces a stronger expectation that organisations will try (wherever reasonable) to support the achievement of the Management Plan's objectives but does not create any binding obligations.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

16. The draft objectives have been subject to an equality impact assessment (<https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2025/01/Equality-Impact-Assessment-NPMP-December-2024.pdf>). It concluded that the impact of the Plan would be neutral in relation to most of the protected characteristics. However, it would have positive impacts in relation to age and disability as a result of the many objectives relating to broadening access and engagement and seeking to support younger people to live and work in the National Park.

Conclusion

17. The National Park Management Plan is the critical document for the future of the National Park. With direct input from the Authority, the draft objectives have been developed by the Partnership over the last 12 months and reflect both the outcomes of the initial public consultation and the scale of the challenges and opportunities

identified in the detailed Evidence Reports. The Plan includes ambitious objectives for nature recovery and tackling climate change, reflecting the scale of activity that will be necessary in Protected Landscapes if the UK is to meet its national legal commitments.

Gary Smith
Deputy Chief Executive

Policy Development Forum – NPMP 2025-30

Specific comments

A1 This general national target looks very unambitious for a National Park. If it cannot be changed, then it should be seen as the least we expect to happen. Note: still waiting for the Government to define 'nature friendly farming' in this context.

A4 – This needs a target date for completion. Before committing to such an objective, we also need to know the scale of activity that will be needed to achieve it.

B1 – would it be better to reduce the overall % ease of use target, but increase the % that is more accessible?

C4 – should say 'species recovery plans', not monitoring plans

C1/C3/C7 – these are all nationally-set targets but is there any scope to make them a bit clearer and less 'jargony'?

F4 – this is currently not SMART. Is it possible to quantify what the Partnership expects to be achieved?

BLANK PAGE