

29 September 2026

Member Feedback on Partnership Representation and Member Champions' Reports

Purpose of the Report

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.

Strategic Framework

3. The information and recommendation contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and support the strategic planning framework.

Background

4. Members represent the Authority on a wide variety of Partnerships. To keep Members and officers updated on this representation, formal reports are brought to each Authority meeting.
5. Member Champions are also engaged in a wide range of activities. Champions take turns in bringing annual reports to the Authority meetings. Reports from the Member Champions for Planning and Sustainable Development and Promoting Understanding are appended to this report.
6. These formal reports provide the opportunity to update Members on the work of the various partnerships we are involved with, the chance to question Member representatives and Champions and a means by which we can continually assess the value of these partnerships and Champion roles.
7. The **Appendices** include:
 - a. A list of Partnership Meetings attended in the last quarter;
 - b. The reports of the Member Champions for Planning and Sustainable Development, and Promoting Understanding.
 - c. A report on the NPUK CEO and Chairs' Forum held in the South Downs

- d. A report prepared for the UK National Parks Conference 2026 that summarises action taken by the Authority to widen participation since the last conference in 2024; and,
- e. A report from the YDNPA Member delegation who attended the UK National Parks Conference 2026, which was held on 16-18 September (**Late Item**)

Financial Implications

8. None

Legal Implications

9. None

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

10. None

Rebecca Eslick
Committees Officer

Partnership Meetings July 2026 – September 2026

Title	Member	Date	Attended	Report
1. Campaign for National Parks	M Corner	20/7/26	Yes	Yes

Partnership Meeting – Campaign for National Parks

I participated in the CNP Council meeting held on-line on 20th July 2026, which aimed to address how the case should be made for National Parks.

The first part of the meeting focused on the status and future of National Parks in Wales. Challenges include funding and the lack of support for a new NP, which the Welsh government committed to in 2021.

A panel, including our very own Dan Holmes, then discussed making the case for NPs. Dr Tom Ratcliffe of York University discussed his research and report on the potential benefits to health from nature-based programmes hosted in Protected Landscapes (including YDNP). All participant break-out room discussions addressed how CNP and council members can make a compelling case for greater NP investment and prioritisation.

A shared message from the discussions was that the case for renewed investment should be grounded in the unique role National Parks can play in delivering public benefits at landscape scale: healthier people, thriving nature, climate resilience, stronger rural economies and places that people value. Points raised included:

- Focusing on the outcomes and solutions National Parks can deliver, rather than solely on the problems they face.
- Demonstrating how NPs can deliver for national economic growth, and using this to ‘speak the Government’s language’, so they are seen as an investment in health, climate change, biodiversity and rural development.
- Promoting National Park Authorities for what they already deliver and what they could deliver with adequate funding; supporting local people and nature while driving tourist economies.
- Recognising that landscape-scale action on climate change and nature recovery is a distinctive strength of National Parks.
- Engaging high profile advocates who can speak up for and campaign for National Parks.
- Understanding the importance of outreach to young people and the wider public for building long-term support, alongside advocacy efforts.

a) Annual Report - Member Champion for Planning and Sustainable Development

Introduction

At the June authority meeting it was agreed that the roles of member champion for development management and for sustainable development should be combined into a single entity. This follows the completion and adoption of the local plan, which had been successfully overseen by Richard Foster to whom, along with officers, much credit should be given.

MC duties undertaken

June 2025: I attended an event in Sedburgh to celebrate the Rawthey Gardens housing development

March 2026: I chaired an online parish council training event covering the development of the local plan and planning conditions and obligations.

June 2026: I attended a conference on rural housing at Ripon Cathedral.

Local Plan Progress

At the authority meeting in June the local plan was adopted and in addition the new design guide was accepted. The period for potential legal challenge expired on Tuesday 9th August. The Plan now has full weight to inform decisions on planning applications. Work is progressing on pre application discussions with several of the allocated housing sites. Work is also continuing on possible rural exceptions schemes in partnership with the North Yorkshire rural enabler team and the Upper Dales Community Land Trust Development

Briefs (guidelines with which to shape the design and implementation of development) at each of the larger allocated housing sites, are being finalised by Development Management

Work is being undertaken to inform the scale of payment (commuted sums) that developers will have to make to the Authority, in the absence of on-site delivery of affordable housing (small sites). Training will take place shortly with relevant officers. Any future Commuted sums arising will be passed to the local housing authorities.

Officers will be providing NYC with information about the Local Plan sites to add to the [NY housing sites directory](#)

The Authority's planning policy webpages are now greatly simplified.

Officers are awaiting changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, following consultation in March.

Work has begun collecting evidence for the York and North Yorkshire Spatial Development Strategy. This will provide overarching long term Planning strategy for the Combined Authority area. It is being prepared in parallel to the NY Local Plan.

Planning applications in the current financial year to date (01/04/2026 – 01/09/26)

All cases received – 272

All determined 266

Performance – Determined within 8 weeks and within the time extension – MINOR = 88%,
OTHER = 94%

Performance – Determined within 8 weeks without the time extension – MINOR = 32%,
OTHER = 69%

Enforcement – received - 17, closed – 8.

Sustainable Development Fund

This year's Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) budget is £100k became available on 1 April 2026. Since April we have received 18 new enquiries. We anticipate that some of the enquiries will progress towards the submission of a grant application to the Authority's SDF. So far 4 new grant applications have been processed, with a £22,125 allocated so far.

Media coverage:

- On 11 June 2026 - media post issued by the Authority promoting the SDF and inviting new applications. This post featured the recently dark sky friendly streetlighting project in Threshfield that was delivered by the Parish Council.
- In July 2026 we had a general promotional article for the SDF in the Summer edition of our Dales magazine which was sent to all households.

Members representing the Authority at SDF promotional events (previously funded projects).

- Derek Twine attended a film premiere for Our Generation is Green on 8 July 2026 at Settle Victoria Hall. This was hosted by Willow Driscoll Duke (via YDMT's Youth Environment Forum).
- Dan Holmes attended an exhibition in Leeds on 15 July 2026 relating to the recently funded Sphagnum Pioneers project (restoration of peatlands) hosted by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.
- Derek Twine attended the opening event of Austwick Village Show on 1 August 2026. The event showcased the recent installation of 12 roof mounted solar panels on the rear roof of the Parish Hall.

Project name	What the SDF grant is for	Applicant	Amount of SDF grant (£)	Total project cost (£)
Rebuild heritage wall, Bainbridge	Rebuilding a historic wall linking to the Quaker Meeting House in Bainbridge to secure the future of this important and prominent boundary feature.	Wensleysdale & Swaledale Quaker Trust	6,300.00	9,310.00
Multi Use Games Area LED lighting upgrade	Installation of 8 replacement LED asymmetric narrow beam low glare floodlights that will be fitted with visors to reduce upward light spill and help to reduce light pollution.	Yorebridge Sports Development Association Ltd	5,930.00	7,910.00
Access 360	Online guidance for visitors that will give details about routes, facilities and the surrounding area at six accessible visitor locations. This should enable visitors to plan their visit and help to support more people to enjoy the Yorkshire Dales.	Mountains for All CIC	4,945.00	7,045.00
The People & Places of the Northern Dales	Photographic exhibition celebrating the special qualities of the Northern Dales at Richmond Station. This will form part of the Swaledale Festival 2027.	Wendy McDonnell Photography	4,950.00	10,850.00

Challenges

The usual challenge of finding the correct balance between involvement and unnecessary interference with officers' time and work.

Climate and nature considerations

None

Andrew Murday
September 2026

b) Annual Report - Member Champion for Promoting Understanding

Natural Health Service Pilot

The UK's first Protected Landscape-led (YDNPA, NYMNPA & Nidderdale and Howardian Hills NLs) Natural Health Service was piloted over the winter by North York Moors Trust as part of York & North Yorkshire's Moving Forward campaign to help improve wellbeing, reduce loneliness and support people to get and stay active. Backed by £100,000 through the Shared Prosperity Fund, the project has trained 148 professionals from across health, housing, employment, environmental and criminal justice sectors, with 50 participants experiencing the first ten-week intervention course, including activities such as sensory, creative, practical and skills-based experiences designed to support wellbeing and confidence.

The programme delivered strong improvements in mental (+24.1%), social (+17.5%) and physical (+13.5%) wellbeing, alongside a 15.2% reduction in loneliness. All participants would recommend the programme, reporting improved confidence, mood, social connection and motivation. The person-centred approach and the Protected Landscape setting were identified as key factors in its success. The link to the full evaluation report is here [Natural+Health+Service+for+North+Yorkshire+Report+-+Final.pdf](#).

The trial will be extended by a further 18 months, funded with £550,000 from the Mayor's budget.

Championing National Parks For Everyone

The Championing National Parks for Everyone (CNPfE) project finishes this year, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and led by the charity Peak District Mosaic in collaboration with Yorkshire Dales, Peak District and North York Moors National Park Authorities.

The project worked with people from culturally and ethnically diverse communities to:

- Support more people to connect with nature and enjoy the National Parks
- Deliver outdoor activity days and training events that develop skills, confidence and awareness of the benefits of National Parks
- Deliver training sessions and provide resources to create a network of Community Champions, who are empowered to lead their own visits that introduce others to the National Parks in the way they think best
- Provide new employment and training opportunities in the sector
- Provide a variety of volunteering opportunities meeting the needs and interests of these communities

30 community champions have taken part in project in the Yorkshire Dales with them leading activities across the National Park. These events enabled many participants from communities new to the National Park, to experience the Dales, build confidence in the outdoors, make new connections and feel a sense of belonging in the landscape

Feedback from participants has been really positive, evaluation report expected shortly.

Coast to Coast

The official opening of the Coast-to-Coast National Trail took place in March of 2026. The 190-mile route running across the North of England from St Bees on the Irish sea to Robin Hood's Bay on the North Sea traversing three National Parks along the way. The opening culminated in 3 years' work of partner organisations of which YDNPA were the lead Authority, and will continue to be so, as we are with The Pennine Way.

Dark Skies festival

Continues to highly popular, with colleagues in Comms and North York Moors developing dark skies virtual experiences using the VR headsets for the coming festival in February of 2027

Cheese festival

Coming up in early October but discussions with Settle Carlisle railway to look at opportunities for the celebration of local food (stations and on train)

Visitor Levy

The team continue to feed into consultations regarding York and North Yorkshire's potential visitor levy being suggested by David Skaith. There is a meeting with NYC LVEP advisory group next week so will learn more then

Going Places project - Dales Countryside Museum.

The exhibition which has been developed by the Young Creatives working with partner organisations was launched at the national arboretum and due to be on display at DCM in October.

Looking Forward

September 2026 – Feb 2028:

Further funding received from the Y&NYCA Mayors Active Travel Fund for an innovative behaviour-change programme within the same four Protected Landscapes enabling walking, wheeling and public transport use to create healthier, more active communities across the region. Connected elements:

- Continuation of the structured 10-week nature-based intervention, building connection with these landscapes whilst supporting people with a range of health, wellbeing and social needs – increased focus on building confidence of walking in nature.
- Breath of Fresh Air Walking Programme – offering opportunity for people to improve their activity levels and enjoy time in nature through short, guided walks accessible by public transport.
- A new strand of the Natural Health Service programme focused on improving the health, wellbeing and outdoor independence of children and young people across North Yorkshire. Including: development and delivery of a walking programme for primary and secondary schools and the development of a North Yorkshire-wide Nature Prescription Calendar for children aged 8–12 and their families.

October 2026 – March 2027

YDNPA has received funding from Natural England to develop and test an evidence-based methodology for engaging urban communities with health inequalities who live a sizeable distance away from Protected Landscapes. The research will investigate how different intervention design and engagement models influence the participation by these communities with Protected Landscapes. Outputs will include a transferable framework, evaluation methodology and toolkit that can be applied by National Parks and Protected Landscapes nationally.

Adventures Away from Home - November 2026 – March 2027

Funding received from the Adventures Away from Home Fund - led by UK Youth in collaboration with the Department for Culture Media and Sport – enabled YDNPA to support 156 young people from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds to take part in exciting new adventures in the National Park, from visiting a farm to an evening under the stars, the aim was for the young people to experience the joy of being outdoors and connected to nature. These supported opportunities helped participants from 14 youth groups develop their confidence and well-being, discover their potential, and build skills that last a lifetime.

Our Natural Futures

We are continuing to lead the development of the NPUK bid to the UK Fund for the 'Our Natural Futures' project to increase the diversity and scale of youth participation in National Parks

A huge thank you to Rebecca Greenfield, Julie Barker and their teams for all the support they continually give me in my role as MC, but mainly for their incredibly hard work in delivering all that they do on behalf of the authority and the communities that they work with.

Neil Heseltine
10 September 2026

NPUK CEO and Chairs' Forum – 30 June-1 July 2026 - South Downs NP

The overall theme of the two-day conference in the beautiful town of Arundel, West Sussex, was how to continue to generate income from external sources, mainly through the work of National Parks Partnership, and then the practical implementation of this funding in the day-to-day work of the Protected Landscapes across the UK, and how these relationship and partnerships can work to the mutual benefit of all involved.

Tuesday 30 June

NPP Strategic Evolution to Diversify Income Generation

Cat Hawkins - CEO, National Parks Partnership - [National Parks Partnerships - National Parks Partnerships](#)

NPP has now been in existence for 10 years and for the majority of that time the focus has been on commercial partnerships between investors and the individual National Parks. This is currently shifting and evolving into a more diversified income generation, looking at different types of relationships with investors, including the continuation of existing partnerships, strengthened with programme-led deals aligned to national priorities, but also with the addition of philanthropic funding alongside green finance, with private investment into scaled nature recovery across all Protected Landscapes

Finance Accelerator: The Future – National Landscapes and Green Finance

John Watkins - CEO, National Landscapes Association

The funding of National Landscapes (34 of them across England and Wales) is at a very different level to that of National Parks. Although in lots of ways they have very different challenges, in many ways their challenges are just the same, particularly with regards to land management, nature's recovery, climate breakdown and visitor pressures. It was important to understand that if we are to achieve our national objectives then the role of the NLs is critical, and the funding of this through NPP & private finance will be crucial

External Voices

Debbie Stockwell / Rachel Solomon Williams (Aldersgate Group)

A really important insight from representatives of the investment sector, and outside of the Protected Landscapes family, about what the expectations are with regards to returns on any investment. This can vary from one investor to another and may not necessarily require a financial return, but understanding the needs of each individual investor is incredibly important in the building of long-term, lasting relationships.

Nature-Based Solutions: National Park Case Studies

Holly Story NPP NBS Lead

Prior to heading out to see each project happening on the ground, Holly gave us a detailed account of how she had been able to work with two estates within the South Downs National Park. From inception of the ideas from each estate, she then had to work through the different needs of each project, how this could and would be funded and how it would work in practice. The practicalities and complications of such a scheme have been difficult to overcome, but with a willingness on both sides, a solution which has suited all parties is now a reality on the ground, combining food production, the natural environment and financial sustainability

Nature-based Solutions in the South Downs NP: Talk and site visit at Halnaker Farm and West Dean. James Winkworth, Nick Heasman and Mark Alden

[Halnaker Hill Farm | Restoration, Regeneration, & Biodiversity Net Gain \(BNG\) in the South Downs](#) [West Dean Estate | West Dean](#)

Site visits, always the highlight of any conference. Officers from the SDNPA, and representatives of each estate talked us through the whole process of arriving at how non-governmental funding could work on the respective estates whilst also delivering the management plan objectives of the NP. Unprofitable, conventional arable cropping had given way to regenerative livestock farming practices, in a lowland setting, incorporating areas of wood pasture and wetland creation, and the uplift in nature was very evident. Amazing to see.

Outdoor Clothing Partner: A chance to review the kit and meet the Montane Team to discuss the partnership

The team at NPP have negotiated a new kit deal for all the employees of all the 15 National Parks across Wales, Scotland and England. The kit ranges from office staff to rangers out in all weathers, it's more complicated than it may first appear, but the CEO of Montane gave us an insight into their equipment, their ethos and what it means to them to be involved in working with the NP community and brand. The 5-year deal amounts to 13,000+ items of gear at a retail value of approx. £1.2m.

After dinner speaker, Dean Spears, Head of Sussex Bay

[Sussex Bay | Investing in Nature Conservation and Shoreline Restoration](#)

A really interesting but very different form of nature recovery to what were used to here in the Yorkshire Dales. Although a lot of the challenges are very different with shoreline restoration, the principles of arriving at solutions can be just the same, including the importance of ensuring that all the various relevant communities are very much on board.

Wednesday 1 July

Scaled National Philanthropy – Unlocking our Potential through the National Parks Foundation Cat Hawkins / Gordon Watson

A session that builds on the success of the principle we have here in Yorkshire Dales with our work with YDMT (other NPs have similar arrangements) and whether that way of working can be elevated at a national scale through the National Parks Foundation. Whilst there was general support for the idea amongst the various Chairs and CEOs there was a note of caution that it shouldn't impact on our work or relationships that have been developed at a local level, however it was felt that there was a significant opportunity to expand on all that the National Parks have to offer.

This was followed by a regional round up of topical updates:

Wildfire Management - Grant Moir, CEO, Cairngorms NPA

NPUK comms and brand update - Natalie Harvey, Comms lead, NPP

Joint statement on the Historic Environment - Phil Mulligan, CEO, Peak District NPA

UK NP Member Inductions - David Renwick, CEO, Northumberland NPA

A superb couple of days in the blistering heat of Southern England, many thanks for the opportunity

Neil Heseltine, 9 September 2026

NPUK Conference 2026 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Follow-up Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

1. What actions has your organisation taken since the 2024 UK National Parks Conference to advance equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)?

- a) Our established **EDI working group** has:
 - invited staff and guest speakers to share knowledge and lived experience;
 - developed [a dedicated EDI section of the Authority's website](#) to highlight and celebrate the work taking place;
 - produced a bespoke video promoting the importance and benefits of supporting EDI across the organisation and National Park.
- b) We have made the National Park more **accessible** to people of all ages and abilities by:
 - creating/enhancing 3 'Miles without Stiles' routes;
 - installing 2 new 'Changing Places' toilets;
 - providing free-to-use 'Trampers' at 3 National Park Visitor Centres and the Dales Countryside Museum;
 - launching a [digital Access Hub](#) to provide accessibility information to help people with a wide range of disabilities plan their visits to the National Park.
- c) Worked with **groups from under-served communities** to co-design activity days, and support people from these communities to access the Yorkshire Dales National Park more easily. This has been exemplified through [Championing National Parks for Everyone](#), a project, delivered in partnership with Peak District Mosaic and North York Moors NPA, to train local volunteers from ethnically and culturally diverse communities as Community Champions.
- d) We published a [Statement on Youth Participation](#) in October 2025, re-emphasising the Authority's commitment to the objectives of Europarc Youth Manifesto; amplifying **youth voice** and continued action to ensure this is truly embedded within the culture and work of the organisation. We have co-opted 2 young people on to our Finance and Resources Committee; 2 youth engagement trainees using more inclusive recruitment techniques; and relaunched the Young Rangers programme, with a new focus on enabling access for a more diverse group of young people.
- e) We have continued work to widen access to **volunteering** opportunities and develop green skills for jobs. In the recent 'Roots to Jobs: Building Green Skills Together' project, we worked in partnership with Bradford College and local green sector organisations to co-create a green skills development programme tailored for young people from marginalised communities, including refugees and people seeking asylum. EDI training has been provided for volunteers, and is now part of induction training for new volunteers.

2. What have been the most significant outcomes, challenges or lessons arising from this work, and what are your current priorities for further widening participation and improving inclusion?

- a) We have kept in mind the principle of 'nothing about us without us' and we have funded individuals/organisations with lived experience of systemic discrimination to advise on policy, practice and project development. For example, working with [Experience Community](#) on the audit and design of Miles without Stiles routes, and with the Community Champions on the development of future people and nature projects.
- b) Through the EDI Working Group and wider training opportunities, staff have been able to hear directly from people with lived experience, helping to challenge established views, increase awareness of barriers faced by others and encourage more inclusive thinking across the Authority. These conversations have played an important role in building understanding and confidence, helping staff to consider different perspectives and make more inclusive decisions in their day-to-day work.
- c) Legislative/legal constraints have not allowed us to appoint young people as full Members of the Authority, limiting our ability to fully embed youth voice into this key decision-making body.
- d) Recent visitor management issues in the National Park have given rise to media/social media attention. This has resulted in comments being made and discriminatory views shared about those thought to be responsible for these issues on local, regional and national platforms. This has seriously challenged the aspiration expressed in our National Park Management Plan for the Yorkshire Dales to be a welcoming place for all visitors.
- e) Clear priorities for further widening and improving inclusion within the work of YDNPA and National Park partner organisations are embedded within the new [National Park Management Plan 2025–2030](#) (notably, objectives 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6 and 6.6).

Appendix E

A report from the YDNPA Member delegation who attended the UK National Parks Conference 2026, which was held on 16-18 September 2026 (**Late Item**)