



MINUTES

Meeting: **National Park Authority**

Date: Friday 7 February 2025 at 10.00 am

Venue: Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell

Chair: K Smith

Present: J W Berresford, M Beer, R Bennett, P Brady, M Chaplin, J Dugdale, C Greaves, A Gregory, L Grooby, B Hanley, A Hart, L Hartshorne, G Heath, I Huddleston, D Murphy, A Nash, C O'Leary, K Potter, V Priestley, K Richardson, K Rustidge, Dr R Swetnam, S Thompson

A Martin attended to observe and speak but not vote.

Apologies for absence: M Buckler, C Farrell, J Wharmby, Y Witter and B Woods.

9/25 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 8 NOVEMBER 2024

The minutes of the meeting of the National Park Authority Meeting held on 8 November 2024 were approved as a correct record.

10/25 URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair reported that there was one item of urgent business to consider regarding the Local Development Scheme Update and the report had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting.

It was agreed to consider the report after item 12 on the agenda.

11/25 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present to make representations to the Committee.

12/25 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

13/25 CHAIR'S BRIEFING

The Chair of the Authority welcomed Amber Inman and Tsel Gerel from DEFRA to the meeting and asked them to say a few words by way of introduction.

The Chair then provided the following verbal updates to Members:

Together with the CEO attended a meeting with Marie Tidball, MP on the 31st January 2025.

On Thursday 6th February, attended a meeting with Amber and Tsel from DEFRA, and introduced them to various landscape elements in the Peak District e.g. Millers Dale, Cressbrook Bridge and Longstone Edge.

The Chair reminded Members that following on from an email from the Head of Resources this week, Members will cease to be supplied with committee papers from the Authority Meeting in March. This is to save on costs and staff time. Members to respond directly to the Head of Resources if they feel they have an exceptional circumstance, to continue having hard copies.

There is a Government consultation looking at Standards in Local Government, and the Government is keen to hear from not just Members but also members of the public. Closing date is the 26th February, so the Chair asked that Members have a look at the consultation.

Ken Rustidge joined the meeting at 10:10am.

14/25 CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

The Chief Executive provided the following updates, since the report was published:

- The Chief Executive drew Members attention to a recent Land Use framework consultation which has been published. Members can respond individually but a collective response will be done by the National Park. This will require a lot of work by the Landscape Team as well as the CEO and National Parks England.

RESOLVED:

To note the report.

15/25 GOVERNANCE REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEFRA

The Chief Executive reported that following on from the last Authority Meeting, where this item was discussed by Members, the Chief Executive proposed that a letter be drafted to the Secretary of State and for Members to agree the wording and to clarify the points that would go into the letter, which would reflect the general discussion held by Members in January 2025.

Tsel Gerel from DEFRA informed Members that the reform was to engage with the Authority by modernising governance to better meet the environmental challenges and ensuring that the landscapes reflected the diversity and values of the nation. Tsel reported that the Government were looking to develop new legislation, with the intent to strengthen the protected landscape's mandate to recover for nature, and also revamp governance to provide the National Park Authority with a general power of competence. The programme of engagement would start in April.

Members welcomed the proposal, and agreed that the Authority needed to be part of the conversation and be pro-active to get the best outcome for the Authority, and to look at not just the constitutional way in which the Authority was set up, but how we work as a membership.

Members agreed that there was a lack of diversity in the current membership but it was important to maintain local representation, as they understand what was going on locally. There was some concern by some Members that if the number of Members was reduced, would there be enough to cover what they currently do? The Chair reported that the Authority would need to know what the outcome of the review was first, and that there was no guarantee that the current committee structure, shape and timings of our meetings would be as they are now.

Members asked whether it would be useful to have a skills audit on how Members are appointed, so it was transparent against a set of skills. The Chair reported that a number of Members had still to complete the recent skills audit, so a reminder with a link would be sent out to those Members that had yet to complete it.

The recommendations as set out in the report were moved, seconded, voted on and carried.

RESOLVED:

1. **That a representation is made to the Secretary of State setting out the points made in 3.4 of the report.**
2. **That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in agreement with the Chair and Deputy Chair, to fully draft and send the representation.**

16/25 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT BLOCK 1 2024/25

The Finance Manager and Stuart Cutts, Internal Auditor from Veritau, were present to respond to Members questions.

The Finance Manager informed Members that the reports had been discussed in details at the Audit, Budget and Project Risk Group and that action notes from those meetings were available.

Members queried whether the rent review dates had been amended and that rent reviews were being carried out on a regular basis? The Finance Manager reported that the Authority had to give the tenant a year's notice if the intention was to put up their rent, and the new Head of Assets ensured that this was one of the first things that was done, so everyone now that is coming up for a rent review was now in the system.

The recommendation as set out in the report was moved, seconded, voted on and carried.

RESOLVED:

That the Internal Audit reports for the three areas covered under Block 1 for 2024/25. Budget setting, monitoring & reporting, Rent reviews, leases & concessions and Moors for the future (in appendices 1-3 of the report respectively) be received and the proposed actions agreed.

17/25 **EXTERNAL AUDIT 2023/24 - STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND EXTERNAL AUDITORS' REPORTS**

Jennifer Norman, Audit Manager at Mazars External Auditors, was present to answer any questions that the Members may have had.

Members asked why the fees had doubled? Jennifer reported that the fees were set by the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) and that they had no input into them and that they didn't actually receive all of the fee, even the fee adjustments was also set by PSAA, with the exception of the IT system implementation which was new this year.

The Finance Manager reported that over the last couple of years there had been a big focus on audit reform because the local government audit system was broken, so some authorities were three or four years behind in their audits, so more money was put into it to bring everything in line. There has also been a lack of auditors, so the only answer was to spend money and fix the problem, but hopefully the fees will then be looked at and may start coming down rather than up, but there is another 10% increase planned for this year, so is very costly to the Authority.

Members asked why they were being asked to approve the annual report from March 2023? Jennifer reported that it was because it was issued at the same time as the audit opinion was signed for the previous year, which was last year, but because of timings it had not had an Authority date where it could be presented to Members, but the 23/24 report now supersedes it, so it is a formality that it is presented.

Members thanked the Officer and External Auditor for the report, but there was some concern on the number of reports submitted, and it would be helpful in future to have an explanation or context in the covering reports on how they all related to each other. The Finance Manager agreed that this would be done.

The recommendations as set out in the report was moved, seconded, voted on and carried.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To approve the audited Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 at Appendix 1 of the report.**
- 2. To consider and note the External Auditor's Audit Completion Report (ACR) 2023/24 at Appendix 2 of the report.**
- 3. To consider and note the External Audit Annual report (AAR) 2023/24 at Appendix 3 of the report.**
- 4. To consider and note the External Audit Annual report (AAR) 2022/23 at Appendix 4 of the report.**
- 5. To note that the Statement of Accounts & associated Letter of representation, needs to be signed by the Chair and by the Chief Finance Officer, once the external audit has been completed, provided that the overall opinion in the audit report remains unqualified.**

18/25 PROPOSED CHANGE OF DATE OF 2025 ANNUAL AUTHORITY MEETING

The report was presented by the Chief Executive to inform Members that the date of the Authority AGM in July 2025 needed to be changed by a week to allow key staff to be available to attend. So, it was proposed that the Annual Meeting would now be held on 11th July and the Programmes and Resources Committee meeting would be held on 4th July. The Chief Executive reported that unlike previous years there would only be one Authority Meeting in July, so the AGM appointments would take place first, followed by any substantive items..

There was a concern by one Member that if they couldn't attend a meeting, that this would show as an absence on the annual report as the dates for all meetings are set a year in advance. So where extra meetings were then added, that they couldn't attend due to other commitments, can this be excluded on the attendance figures. The Chair agreed that this would be discussed with the Governance Review Group, and come back to the Authority with a proposal.

The recommendation as set out in the report, was moved, seconded, voted on and carried.

RESOLVED:

To change the date of the 2025 Annual Authority meeting to 11th July 2025 and to change the date of the Programmes and Resources Committee meeting to 4th July 2025.

19/25 REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF REASONS FOR MEMBER NON-ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

This item was as the Member who was the subject of the report had been able to attend the meeting.

20/25 URGENT BUSINESS: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME UPDATE

This item was dealt with at the end of the Items for decision.

The Policy & Communities Team Manager was present for this item and informed Members that the Authority was legally obliged to write and publish the Local Development Scheme (LDS), which is a document that sets out the plans that make up the Local Plan and the timetable for their review. The current LDS was approved in November 2024, but in light of the changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Deputy Prime Minister has instructed all local Planning Authorities to update their LDS before 6th March 2025. The Officer reported that the LDS had been reviewed with only minor changes.

Members confirmed that this had been looked at through the local plan group, but there was some concern on how much work was to be done within the timetable set out and what that would mean to us as an Authority and the local plan. The Officer reported that the Authority would have to take into account anything that would impact on the local plan.

The recommendation as set out in the report, was moved, seconded, voted on and carried.

RESOLVED:

That the revised LDS (dated February 2025) in Appendix 1 of the report is approved.

21/25 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF PROGRAMMES & RESOURCES COMMITTEE - VERBAL UPDATE

The Chair of Programme & Resources Committee gave a verbal update on the work of the committee from the last meeting where the following topic was discussed:

- There had been 2 Programme & Resources Committees since the last Authority meeting.
6th December –approval was provided to the Moors for the Future project to accept funding of up to £800,000 from Rebel Restoration to enter into an agreement to establish a sphagnum demonstration field research lab at Featherbed North, which is close to the Snake Pass so easily accessible. This is also presented in the Due Diligence Annual Report.

24th January – amendments were approved to the Safeguarding and Occupational Health & Safety Policies. There was also a substantive item on the fourth Management Plan Aims – Thriving and Sustainable Communities, which included discussion on proposed changes to the measurement of standard housing needs, sustainable transport, the local plan review, engagement with parishes.

There were no questions from Members.

22/25 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF PLANNING COMMITTEE - VERBAL UPDATE

The Chair of Planning Committee gave a verbal update on the work of the Committee.

- The December Planning Committee was cancelled due to lack of business. This may be due to a slowing down of applications coming in.
- The January Committee had 5 planning items, as well as a report showing a list of enforcement notices that had not been fully complied with, or were being kept a very close eye on because nobody knows quite whether the person in question was going to conform. Some are long standing and haven't been resolved, but it is good that this information is out in the open air and we can see what is going on.

There is another consultation from the Government on the future of Planning Committees and how they operate, which could have serious implications particularly for National Park Authorities because it is proposed that all planning authorities will have a common scheme of delegation as to what it or is not approved by a planning committee.

The Chair of Planning asked that the link to the Protected Landscapes consultation be circulated to all Members and urged them to complete it.

The Authority Solicitor & Monitoring Officer to circulate the link and to the Standards Consultation as well.

There were no questions from Members

23/25 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES - NONE SUBMITTED

There were no outside body reports submitted but the Chair did ask that Members on external bodies, submit a report so that other Members were aware of what was discussed at the meetings and what relevance it might have to the Authority and to its operations and functions.

The meeting ended at 11.10 am