



MINUTES

Meeting: **National Park Authority**

Date: Friday 21 March 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 Buckler, M Chaplin, Prof J Dugdale, C Farrell, A Gregory, L Grooby, L Hartshorne, G Heath, I Huddleston, C O'Leary, K Potter, V Priestley, K Richardson, K Rustidge, Dr R Swetnam, S Thompson, Y Witter

A Martin attended to observe and speak but not vote.

Apologies for absence: C Greaves, B Hanley, A Hart, D Murphy, J Wharmby and B Woods.

28/25 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2025 AND 14 FEBRUARY 2025 (SPECIAL MEETING)

National Park Authority Meeting - 7th February 2025

There was an amendment to item 19/25 where the word "withdrawn" was added so that the sentence read "This item was withdrawn as the Member who was the subject of the report had been able to attend the meeting".

The minutes of the National Park Authority Meeting held on the 7th February 2025 with the above amendment were approved as a correct record.

National Park Authority Meeting - 14th February 2025

There was an amendment to the attendance for the meeting held on 14th February where Lynda Grooby was incorrectly recorded as absent. The meeting attendance was amended to reflect her attendance.

The minutes of the National Park Authority Meeting held on the 14th February 2025 with the above amendment were approved as a correct record.

29/25 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

30/25 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Member declarations of interest.

31/25 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public were present to make representations to the Meeting.

32/25 CHAIR'S BRIEFING

The Chair provided the following verbal update to Members:

- On 13th February the Chair attended the Derbyshire Makes launch at Carsington Reservoir and visited the new headquarters of a jewellery firm.
- Attended two meetings of the National Park England Chairs and Chief Executives and discussed what the response should be from them regarding the funding issues and a document expressing disappointment regarding the budget has now been sent to DEFRA.
- Attended Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting with CEO.
- On 4th February the Chair, Deputy Chair and CEO attended a day long workshop at Newcastle on Tyne under the auspices of National Parks UK, essentially for the northern national parks re-branding of UK wide National Parks, and how this will go forward.
- There is a National Parks UK conference at the end of April 2025 which shall be held in the Peak District.
- The Chair attended the Governance Review Working Group meeting on the 18th March which looked at the roles and structures of the committees with particular reference to Programmes and Resources and a paper shall come to Authority in the future.
- On 20th March, along with the CEO, the Chair attended the launch of the White Peak Loop at Cromford Mills.
- The next National Parks Management Plan Partnership Group Meeting shall be held at Aldern House on 6th June 2025. The 16 Members on the Authority that represent County, District, City or Borough Councils shall receive an email regarding who has been invited from their organisation and would appreciate the assistance of Members to encourage their participation in this strategic annual meeting.
- The Chair mentioned that Members who have finished their 2nd full term of office can request a 2 year extension. This year the government has refused all extension requests and consequently the Deputy Chair shall end his term of office in June this year.

10:03am G Heath arrived

Members asked about the re-branding of UK wide National Parks and whether this was appropriate when finances are stretched and where would the funding for this be coming from? It was clarified that this is not a logo or name change but it is about defining the brand proposition for the future and directions for the National Parks. It will be for agreeing what is the core message in order to secure future deals. The funding comes from the UK Comms budget where each National Park contributes £8,000 per year and will be using money that is already in this budget.

It was noted that 2 members of the Authority were not standing for re-election in May this year and they were thanked for their contributions and hard work.

33/25 CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

The Chief Executive delivered the following update to his report:

- The exact funding settlement has not yet been confirmed, the numbers that are being worked on are indicative, however it is likely there shall be an 8.5% cut to the revenue for the year ahead. It looks to be the same percentage cuts for all English National Parks.
- The PDNPA is likely to get the £600,000 cut replaced as Capital funding which is welcome, however this cannot be spent in the same way.
- Also the PDNPA may receive additional one-off capital funding of up to £1.1 million but there are restrictions on how to spend this capital and it needs to be spent within the year.
- Also there has been funding offered to all 10 members of English National Parks to pay cover the membership fee.
- Fiapl has been given extra money for the next year, staff are in place and money is now available to allocate, this has come at a time that sustainable farming initiative has been put on hold for farmers that are new applicants.
- There has been a date set for a round table with Minister for National Parks with all the Chief Executives of English National Parks, Mary Creagh.
- The Chief Executive was on BBC Derby this week for an hour participating in a question and answer session.
- Attended the tourism awards for region where the PDNPA received a silver award for Millers Dale and the accessibility there which was a good example of a joint project.

Members asked what the extra funding could be used for. There is an existing capital programme where it could be used. Also looking at opportunities for spending the money that could generate more income in the future.

Members congratulated the CEO for predicting the funding issues and dealing with the re-structure ahead of time and for forward planning for the cut in the budget.

34/25 AMP 8 2025-30 LANDSCAPE SCALE PEATLAND RESTORATION (MOORS FOR THE FUTURE PROGRAMME)

Matt Scott-Campbell, Partnership Manager – Moors for The Future, was in attendance. There was no additional comments to add to the published report.

It was noted that it was a very positive determination from OFWAT. It does achieve positive impact and positive outcomes for moorland restoration, flood management and habitat restoration.

A motion to approve the recommendations as set out in the report was proposed, seconded, put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Authority supports the development and establishment of partnering agreements and associated contracts between PDNPA and Severn Trent Water, United Utilities and Yorkshire Water (Water Company partners) for the delivery of AMP 8 habitat restoration aspirations (capital works) and associated research and communications outcomes *up to a maximum value of £20 million between 2025-2030.*

2. **Approval of the terms of the funding from the Water Company partners is delegated to the to the Head of Assets and Enterprise in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and the Finance Manager / Chief Finance Officer (or such other person appointed under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972).**
3. **That authority be delegated to the Authority Solicitor to enter into and determine the terms and conditions of the funding agreements for the Projects in the best interests of the Authority.**
4. **That the Authority may, subject to compliance with its procurement standing orders, enter into contracts for the delivery of the Project outcomes.**
5. **That the Projects be monitored by the Audit, Budget and Project Risk Management Group, or such other committee or group as may be appointed with this same remit.**

35/25 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2025/26

There were no updates to the published report.

Members noted that it was a detailed report with much information to absorb. It was noted that North Yorkshire Council manage investments on behalf of the PDNPA and is part of a bundle, this service level agreement would be up for review and renewal next year and this would be an opportunity to scrutinise where the investments are made. There will be a tender process next year which will be an open process.

Members asked how do the investments policies align with PDNPA risk policies and strategies. They are very low risk and again the investment strategies would be considered in the future, any investments for Local Government Finance have to be carried out with a secure and prudent approach. At the outset of the investment procurement process it is determined that the approach aligns with the parks sustainability strategy and policy.

A motion to approve the recommendations as set out in the report was proposed, seconded, put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED:

1. **That the Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26, which incorporates the Prudential Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement, set out in Appendix 1 be approved.**
2. **That the Annual Investment Strategy from North Yorkshire Council set out in Appendix 2 be adopted as the over-arching Investment Strategy for the Authority's invested reserve funds.**
3. **That the Capital Strategy for 2025/26 set out in Appendix 3 be approved.**
4. **That the Capital Budget for 2025/26 set out in Appendix 4 be approved, noting that delivery of capital projects is subject to compliance with the legal and constitutional requirements of Standing Orders.**

- 5. That the Capital Programme for 2025/26 to 2028/29 set out in Appendix 5 be approved, noting that delivery of capital projects is subject to compliance with the legal and constitutional requirements of Standing Orders.**

36/25 REVENUE BUDGET 2025/26 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL FORECAST 2025/26 TO 2028/29

There were no updates to the published report.

Members enquired whether it was better to assume a flat cash budget year on year and if so should reserves be used to fund the shortfall this year. It was explained that there is no expectation to fund the shortfall totally from the reserves however there is sufficient funding available should it be necessary. There shall be in-year savings and various strategies will be used first to avoid using reserves which include:

- Vacancy control/freeze shall be implemented across the organisation.
- Making use of capital funds where appropriate to offset any of the shortfall.
- Revenue generation from FiPL.
- Increase income through capital projects.

Making use of the above strategies should avoid the need to fund all of the shortfall from reserves. Realistically funding is unlikely to increase but currently focussing on the immediate year ahead. The Government Comprehensive Spending Review will be reported in June 2025, should hear about the national parks allocation Autumn 2025 onwards. The aim would be ideally to invest any reserves on income generating capital projects.

Members congratulated those officers who had put the budget together as it showed some measure of lateral thinking to get the best outcome possible from the increasingly limited resources. The level of detail and savings being found is impressive.

A motion to approve the recommendations as set out in the report was proposed, seconded, put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the revenue budget for the 2025/26 financial year as set out in Appendix 1 be approved, noting that the funding mechanism may be subject to change pending confirmation from DEFRA.**
- 2. That the Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF) for the Authority for the period 2025/26 to 2028/29 be noted.**
- 3. To approve the extension of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme for 2025-26, and to accept the additional funding allocated to the Authority for 2025-26.**
- 4. To continue to temporarily suspend the operation of Standing Order 7.C-3 for the delivery of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme only, and to continue to adopt the requirements set out in the National Framework document for the authorisation of grants under that programme.**

- 5. To continue to delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer or their nominee to complete grant agreements authorised in accordance with the National Framework, in the standard form provided within the National Framework documents.**

37/25 AUTHORITY PLAN 2023-28: YEAR 3 LOOK FORWARD 2025/26 (DECILE 5 & 6)

There were no additional comments to add to the published report.

Members asked about North Lees Estate and the allocation of funding in the capital programme and how realistic are the dates for the anticipated funding spend. Along with the funding from Capital Reserves it is hoped some funding shall also be secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the spending of the monies will be part of the Estate Plan. It was confirmed that there would be widespread consultation which would include the Stanage Forum, Parish Councils, the BMC amongst others which would all be formulated and integrated into the Estate Plan.

The word “profile” was explained in the context of the Governance Working Group and refers to when the sections of the constitution would come to Authority for approval.

Members asked within the context of all of the funding cuts is staff morale holding up, and that it is important not to lose sight of the good work that is being done and this should not be overlooked in the shadow of cuts and the re-organisation.

It was noted that staff morale has been difficult and low, and the whole organisation has been affected. Attendance at softer engagement activities has dropped. There is a need to get back into engaging with staff and building morale. About to launch workforce survey so will find out more as a result of this. There is a need to recognise and celebrate the awards and positive news. Members were encouraged to act as ambassadors for the work that is being done.

The Authority Plan programme is very much about the National Park as a business and how does the Management Plan feed into this? A lot of the Authority Plan is statutory work. The reporting is governed by the demands of DEFRA on a performance basis. There does not seem to be much consideration for what is being done and what is being facilitated. The Management Plan has 4 aims and the Authority Plan focusses on the 5th Aim. Sometimes there is a perception of a disconnect between the two but it is the Management Plan that gives the detail and an update shall be given to Members at the next Authority meeting.

A motion to accept the recommendations as set out in the report was proposed, seconded, put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED:

- 1. The Authority Plan Look Forward delivery plan for Year 3 2025/26 (Decile 5 & 6) is approved.**
- 2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Resources in consultation with the Chair of the Authority to make any necessary amendments to the actions or critical success factors detailed in the Authority Plan Programme Year 3: 2025-26 in Appendix 1.**

38/25 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

M Beer updated the Members on the work of the Local Access Forum (LAF).

1. The Forum received a presentation from Severn Trent on Open Water Swimming and currently Severn Trent are experimenting with this activity at Carsington Water (which is outside of the National Park) and looking to roll it out at Ladybower Reservoir. Concerns were raised regarding car parking and these would be taken into consideration by Severn Trent.
2. The LAF has made representations to Derbyshire County Council re their work on Rights of Way (ROW). Currently the work is dealt with in reporting order, whereas the LAF would like DCC to prioritise the ROW work in order of use and importance.

39/25 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF PROGRAMMES & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

There has not been a meeting of the Programmes & Resources Committee since the last Authority meeting therefore there was no report to Authority Members.

40/25 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Planning Committee gave an update on the last two planning committees and some of the planning decisions taken.

There have been a number of applications from the last 2 meetings which would have been refused if policy had been strictly adhered to. These applications were outlined to Members.

41/25 EXEMPT INFORMATION S100(A) LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

RESOLVED:

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of agenda item 9 to avoid the disclosure of Exempt Information under S100 (A) (4) Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, paragraph 1 "Information relating to any individual" and paragraph 3 "Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)".

42/16 Proposed New Pay and Display Car Parks on Authority Land

The meeting ended at 11.33 am