

# Public Document Pack

**Peak District National Park Authority**

**Tel: 01629 816200**

E-mail: [customer.service@peakdistrict.gov.uk](mailto:customer.service@peakdistrict.gov.uk)

Web: [www.peakdistrict.gov.uk](http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk)

Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell, Derbyshire. DE45 1AE



**Our Values: Care – Enjoy – Pioneer**

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Our Ref: A.1142/5169

Date: 19 March 2026



## NOTICE OF MEETING

Meeting: **National Park Authority**

Date: **Friday 27 March 2026**

Time: **10.00 am**

Venue: **Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell**

PHILIP MULLIGAN  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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## AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Minutes of previous meeting held on 27 February 2026** (*Pages 7 - 12*) 5 mins
3. **Urgent Business**
4. **Public Participation**  
To note any questions or to receive any statements, representations, deputations and petitions which relate to the published reports on Part A of the Agenda.
5. **Members Declarations of Interest**  
Members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary or prejudicial interests they may have in relation to items on the agenda for this meeting.

## FOR INFORMATION

6. **Chair's Briefing - Verbal update** 5 mins
7. **Chief Executive Report - Verbal Update** 10 mins

## FOR DECISION

8. **Internal Audit** (*Pages 13 - 30*) 10 mins  
Appendix 1  
  
Appendix 2
9. **External Audit Next Year Strategy** (*Pages 31 - 64*) 10 mins  
Appendix 1
10. **Risk Policy** (*Pages 65 - 72*) 15 mins  
Appendix 1

## FOR INFORMATION

11. **National Park Management Plan Aim update - Landscape and Nature Recovery** (*Pages 73 - 90*) 20 mins  
Appendix 1  
  
Appendix 2  
  
Appendix 3
12. **National Park Management Plan Aim update - Welcoming Place** (*Pages 91 - 102*) 20 mins  
Appendix 1  
  
Appendix 2

- |     |   |        |
|-----|---|--------|
| 13. | <b>Report from the Chair of Planning Committee - Verbal update</b>  | 5 mins |
| 14. | <b>Reports from Outside Bodies</b>  | 5 mins |
| 15. | <b>Exempt Information S100(A) Local Government Act 1972</b><br>The Committee is asked to consider, in respect of the exempt items whether the public should be excluded from the meeting to avoid the disclosure of Exempt Information. |        |

**Draft motion:**

**That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of agenda items 16,17 and 18 to avoid the disclosure of Exempt Information under S100 (A) (4) Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, paragraph 3 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

#### **Part B**

The following items are exempt, confidential items.

Please go to the Part B agenda items.

- |     |   |         |
|-----|---|---------|
| 16. | <b>PART B - Landscape Discovery Centre Project</b> <i>(Pages 105 - 108)</i>                         | 10 mins |
| 17. | <b>PART B - Landscape Observatory Accelerator Funding</b> <i>(Pages 109 - 112)</i>                  | 20 mins |
| 18. | <b>PART B - Exempt minutes from previous meeting - 27 February 2026</b><br><i>(Pages 113 - 118)</i> | 5 mins  |

#### **Duration of Meeting**

In the event of not completing its business within 3 hours of the start of the meeting, in accordance with the Authority's Standing Orders, the Authority will decide whether or not to continue the meeting. If the Authority decides not to continue the meeting it will be adjourned and the remaining business considered at the next scheduled meeting.

If the Authority has not completed its business by 1.00pm and decides to continue the meeting the Chair will exercise discretion to adjourn the meeting at a suitable point for a 30 minute lunch break after which the committee will re-convene.

#### **ACCESS TO INFORMATION - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (as amended)**

##### **Agendas and reports**

Copies of the Agenda and Part A reports are available for members of the public before and during the meeting. These are also available on the website <http://democracy.peakdistrict.gov.uk>

##### **Background Papers**

The Local Government Act 1972 requires that the Authority shall list any unpublished Background Papers necessarily used in the preparation of the Reports. The Background Papers referred to in

each report, PART A, excluding those papers that contain Exempt or Confidential Information, PART B, can be inspected on the Authority's website.

### **Public Participation and Other Representations from third parties**

Please note that meetings of the Authority and its Committees may take place at venues other than its offices at Aldern House, Bakewell when necessary. Public participation is still available and anyone wishing to participate at the meeting under the Authority's Public Participation Scheme is required to give notice to the Customer and Democratic Support Team to be received not later than 12.00 noon on the Wednesday preceding the Friday meeting. The Scheme is available on the website <http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/looking-after/about-us/have-your-say> or on request from the Customer and Democratic Support Team 01629 816362, email address: [democraticandlegalsupport@peakdistrict.gov.uk](mailto:democraticandlegalsupport@peakdistrict.gov.uk).

### **Written Representations**

Other written representations on items on the agenda, except those from formal consultees, will not be reported to the meeting if received after 12noon on the Wednesday preceding the Friday meeting.

### **Recording of Meetings**

In accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 members of the public may record and report on our open meetings using sound, video, film, photograph or any other means this includes blogging or tweeting, posts on social media sites or publishing on video sharing sites. If you intend to record or report on one of our meetings you are asked to contact the Customer and Democratic Support Team in advance of the meeting so we can make sure it will not disrupt the meeting and is carried out in accordance with any published protocols and guidance.

The Authority uses an audio sound system to make it easier to hear public speakers and discussions during the meeting and makes an audio visual broadcast and recording available after the meeting. These recordings will be retained for three years after the date of the meeting.

### **General Information for Members of the Public Attending Meetings**

Please note meetings of the Authority and its Committees may take place at venues other than its offices at Aldern House, Bakewell when necessary, the venue for a meeting will be specified on the agenda. There may be limited spaces available for the public at meetings and priority will be given to those who are participating in the meeting. It is intended that the meetings will be visually broadcast via YouTube and the broadcast will be available live on the Authority's website.

This meeting will take place at Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell, DE45 1AE.

Aldern House is situated on the A619 Bakewell to Baslow Road. Car parking is available. Local Bus Services from Bakewell centre and from Chesterfield and Sheffield pick up and set down near Aldern House. Further information on Public transport from surrounding areas can be obtained from Traveline on 0871 200 2233 or on the Traveline website at [www.travelineeastmidlands.co.uk](http://www.travelineeastmidlands.co.uk).

Please note that there is no refreshment provision for members of the public before the meeting or during meeting breaks. However, there are cafes, pubs and shops in Bakewell town centre, approximately 15 minutes walk away.

### **To: Members of National Park Authority:**

Chair: K Smith  
Deputy Chair: J Dugdale

N Adams	M Beer
R Bennett	P Brady
M Buckler	M Chaplin
H Corran	C Farrell
C Greaves	B Hanley
L Hartshorne	I Huddleston

C Kelly  
A Martin  
C O'Leary  
V Priestley  
K Rustidge  
Dr R Swetnam  
J Wharmby

S Mabbott  
A Nash  
K Potter  
K Richardson  
M Smith  
S Thompson  
Y Witter

Constituent Authorities  
Secretary of State for the Environment  
Natural England

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**Peak District National Park Authority**  
**Tel: 01629 816200**  
E-mail: [customer.service@peakdistrict.gov.uk](mailto:customer.service@peakdistrict.gov.uk)  
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Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell, Derbyshire. DE45 1AE



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## MINUTES

Meeting: **National Park Authority**

Date: Friday 27 February 2026 at 10.00 am

Venue: Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell

Chair: K Smith

Present: Prof J Dugdale, N Adams, M Beer, R Bennett, P Brady, M Buckler, H Corran, C Farrell, C Greaves, B Hanley, L Hartshorne, I Huddleston, S Mabbott, A Martin, C O'Leary, K Potter, V Priestley, K Richardson, K Rustidge, M Smith, Dr R Swetnam, S Thompson, J Wharmby and Y Witter

Apologies for absence: M Chaplin, C Kelly and A Nash.

### **1/26 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2025**

The following amendment was made Item 107/25 to the Chair's briefing to read "Steel Cotton Rail Trail".

The minutes of the meeting of the National Park Authority held on 28 November 2025, with the above amendment, were approved as a correct record.

### **2/26 URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

### **3/26 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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

### **4/26 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declaration of interest was declared:

#### Item 15 – Partnership Agreement

H Corran declared that she currently volunteering through work for PPCV.

### **5/26 CHAIR'S BRIEFING**

The Chair provided the following verbal update to Members regarding his attendance at various events in addition to the weekly briefing meetings with the Chief Executive and Deputy Chair, as well as attendance at 3 Planning Committee meetings with associated site visits and one Resources Committee meeting: -

- 5 Local Plan Steering Group meetings
- A meeting of the Governance Working Group
- Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting
- In December there was an extraordinary meeting of National Parks England regarding the recruitment of the new National Park England Director
- NPUK meeting also in December
- 9 Dec the Chair met with CEO and Andrew McCloy to establish some content for 75<sup>th</sup> document and an opportunity to share perspectives on the Peak District National Park
- 11 Dec – NPE Board Meeting
- 15 Dec – Participated with CEO in a progress meeting with EMCA Mayor over progress with the Buxton Rail Initiative
- 6 Jan – Was part of the interview panel for the Executive Director of NPE in London
- 9 Jan – met with Sue Albion - the new Chair of National Parks Partnership (NPP)
- Jan – met with directors of NPE and new Chair – Vanessa Roland
- 15 Jan – CEO, Chair and Deputy Chair were interviewed as part of the DEFRA consultancy initiative about governance of protected landscapes
- 19 Jan - Participated on the National Parks England Governance Working Group
- 28 Jan – along with the CEO and Officers the Chair met with new Chief Executive and some of the Directors of EMCA to try to establish relationships with EMCA and inform on the role of the National Park.

10:10am *N Adams attended the meeting.*

## 6/26 CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

The Chief Executive delivered the following updates to his report:

- 2 new staff had started within the new Landscapes Connections Team.
- Interviews have taken place for the new Head of Assets and Enterprise
- The CEO attended the annual meeting with DEFRA shall share the slide deck with Members.

Members made the following points:

- The Chair and CEO were thanked for their reports and for their continued hard work

- It was noted that a replacement Member from Staffordshire Moorlands Council has not yet been appointed
- Transport links were discussed and work is being carried out in partnership with the new Mayor of Sheffield who has budgets for transport and buses, and there is input into new travel plans proposed. Public transport remains a priority in order to transport visitors into the National Park.
- A Peak Park Initiative has been launched to look at integration and co-ordination of transport amongst the constituent authorities.
- The timescales for the Local Government Reform were mentioned with an announcement regarding the chosen option being made in June 2026. In April/May 2027 there would be elections to the shadow authorities that will come into being in 2027.

#### **7/26 AUTHORITY PLAN 2023 - 28: YEAR 4 LOOK FORWARD 2026/27 (DECILE 7 & 8)**

The Data, Strategy and Performance Officer presented their report which reviews the Year 4 look forward actions for 2026-27.

The following areas were discussed:-

- The maintenance of footpaths
- Matched funding and what costs it covers and it was noted that as an Authority it is not possible to claim overheads via matched Lottery Funding.
- If there was capacity within the Legal Team to progress the review of the Standing Orders which remains a priority.
- The Nature Recovery Plan (NRP) and the apparent lack of targets associated with it. It was explained that the NRP is not reported through the Authority Plan but through the Management Plan. It was noted that an extra resource has been allocated to ensure that the actions for the NRP are progressed.
- The progress of the Local Plan was discussed along with the timetable and the implications if the deadline is not met. It is critical that the July deadline is met to allow for the required period of consultation and pre-submission work to be completed.
- Exposure to slippage in the Authority Plan was discussed, it was noted that a key staff appointment has recently been made and the authority is now expecting a period of stability and is not anticipating any further reductions which might impact on delivery.
- It was clarified that the climate change objective in point E of the plan refers to the Authority's business emissions.

The recommendations as set out in the report were moved, seconded, put to the vote and carried.

**RESOLVED:**

1. **The Authority Plan Programme for Year 4 2026/27 (Decile 7 & 8) is approved (see Appendix 1).**
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 4: 2026- 27 in Appendix 1 due to arising changes in circumstance.**

## **8/26 COMMUNITIES AIM UPDATE FOR NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Policies & Communities Officer presented the report for Members which informs Members about the Authority's progress since January 2025 with respect to the Aims and Objectives of the National Park Management Plan in relation to Thriving Communities, and what this means for the future.

The following points were discussed:

- Business Peak District whose events are hosted at Aldern House and how this organisation has grown within the last year.
- The distribution of grants across the national park.
- A proportionate amount of Decarbonisation and Community Resilience Grants has been allocated to the national park area.
- The progress on the Active Travel Plan and the high level network of trails plan
- Potential risks regarding the new Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) which has introduced another level of plan making which will sit above the Local Plan and is coming out prior to the summer recess. The Peak District National Park will be covered by six Mayoral Authorities and therefore six SDS plans.

*10:46am K Rustidge left the meeting and returned at 10:50am*

The recommendation as set out in the report was moved, seconded, put to the vote and carried.

### **RESOLVED:**

1. **To note the progress report for the National Park Management Plan Thriving Communities Theme.**

## **9/26 REPORT FROM CHAIR OF PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The Chair of the Planning Committee gave an update on the business of the last three planning Committees held on 5 December 2025, 16 January 2026 and 13 February 2026.

### **RESOLVED:**

**To note the report.**

## 10/26 REPORT FROM CHAIR OF RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Resources Committee gave an update on the business of the last Resources Committee held on 23 January 2026.

### RESOLVED:

To note the report.

## 11/26 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

### 13.1 *Peak District Local Access Forum*

- Opportunity to improve transport across the national park and the mechanism and process to do this.

### 13.2 *Peak District National Park Foundation*

- The Peak District National Park Foundation is going from strength to strength and is now attracting large donations. They shall be involved in 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.
- Paragraph 3 should read the “Derbyshire Record Office” and not the “Derby Record Office”.

### RESOLVED:

To note the reports

## 12/26 EXEMPT INFORMATION S100(A) LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

### RESOLVED:

**That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of agenda items 15,16,17 and 18 to avoid the disclosure of Exempt Information under S100 (A) (4) Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, paragraph 3 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

The draft motion as set out above was proposed, seconded, put to the vote and carried.

11:03am *The meeting adjourned and recommenced at 11:15am.*

## **PART B – CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

### **Summary of Decisions**

#### **13/26 Renewal of Partnership Contract**

The recommendations as set out in the report were moved and seconded, put to the vote and carried.

#### **14/26 Revenue Budget 2026/27 and Medium-Term Financial Forecast 2026/27 to 2029/30**

The recommendations as set out in the report with an amendment regarding the timeframe to recommendation 4, were proposed, seconded, put to the vote and carried.

#### **15/26 Annual Capital Strategy, Capital Budget and Treasury Management Strategy Statement**

The recommendations as set out in the report were moved and seconded, put to the vote and carried.

#### **16/26 Exempt minutes from Authority Meeting on 28 November 2025**

The exempt minutes from Authority Meeting on Friday 28 November 2025 were approved as a correct record.

The meeting ended at 12.00 pm

## **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT BLOCK 2 2025/26**

### **1. Purpose**

The report presents to Members the Internal Auditors recommendations for block two of the 2025/26 audit and the agreed actions for consideration.

### **2. Context**

2.1 The Auditors give an opinion based on four grades of assurance. Substantial Assurance, Reasonable Assurance, Limited Assurance and No Assurance. Contract Procedural Rules received an overall opinion of Reasonable Assurance and New Starters and Casual Workers received a rating of Substantial Assurance.

2.2 The priority of agreed actions is determined based on a rating of Critical, Significant, Moderate and Opportunity. Contract Procedural Rules received one Significant and two Moderate findings. New Starters and Casual Workers had no findings. Follow up actions and implementation deadlines have been agreed with the responsible manager and further details can be found within Appendix 1 and 2.

### **3. Proposals**

3.1 Managers have carefully considered the internal auditors' recommendations, and the agreed actions are set out in the audit reports in Appendices 1 and 2 for Members consideration.

### **4. Recommendations**

**4.1 That the Internal Audit reports for the two areas covered under Block 2 for 2025/26 Contract Procedural Rules and New Starters and Casual Workers (in appendices 1 and 2 respectively) be received and the proposed actions agreed.**

### **5. Corporate Implications**

#### **a. Legal**

Pursuant to Regulation 5 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Authority, as a relevant authority defined in paragraph 2, Schedule 2 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, must undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.

#### **b. Financial**

There are resource implications of implementing recommendations and this is why the priority rating of recommendations are important, as this has to be managed with existing budgets and staffing levels, taking account of the level of risk agreed by management. The cost of the Internal Audit Service Level Agreement is included within the overall Finance Budget.

c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan

The Authority Plan includes Objective F (Governance) - to have best practice governance arrangements in place.

d. Risk Management

The Internal Audit process is regarded as an important part of the overall internal controls operated by the Authority. Our Internal Auditors provide independent assurance that internal controls are functioning as intended. They will report significant risks back to management and offer recommendations to combat such risks.

e. Net Zero

With the exception of attendance at Authority meetings where required, all meetings with Internal Auditors are held virtually, reducing the associated emissions caused by business travel.

**6. Background papers (not previously published)**

None.

**7. Appendices**

Appendix 1: Internal Audit Report- Contract Procedural Rules

Appendix 2: Internal Audit Report- New Starters and Casual Workers

**Report Author and Responsible Officer, Job Title and Publication Date**

Author: Sinead Butler, Finance Manager & Chief Financial Officer. Responsible Officer: Emily Fox, Head of Resources 05/03/2026

# CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Page 15

	Critical	Significant	Moderate	Opportunity
Findings	0	1	2	0
Overall audit opinion	<b>Reasonable assurance</b>			

Status: Final

Date Issued: 5 December 2025

Responsible Officer: Authority  
Solicitor

## INTRODUCTION

The Peak District National Park Authority's (the Authority) Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs) set out the rules the Authority must follow when procuring goods, services or works. The rules are intended to ensure that the Authority's procurement practices ensure best value, a competitive and transparent process, compliance with legislative requirements, demonstrate good governance, and protect from allegations of wrongdoing relating to specific procurement decisions.

The CPRs also include guidance for contracts exempt from the usual procurement rules. Exemptions may be granted for a variety of reasons such as partnership arrangements, emergencies, and where goods or services are only available from one supplier. Exemptions should still be given proper oversight and authorisation according to the CPRs.

## OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The purpose of this audit was to provide assurance to management that procedures and controls within the system ensure that:

- ▲ Adequate arrangements are in place to ensure any contract exemptions to CPRs are monitored and appropriately authorised.

The audit included a targeted review of the Authority's draft CPRs to check financial thresholds are in line with best practice.

## KEY FINDINGS

Our review found that contract exemptions were generally well-justified in accordance with the predefined list of acceptable reasons outlined in the CPRs. In addition, the requesting officers had provided detailed and reasonable explanations for the exemptions they sought.

The relevant documentation for contract exemptions had also been retained, which should allow the Authority to respond if challenged. The Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer had approved the exemptions, usually via signatures on the exemption request form, although there was once instance where the signatures had not been dated. An issue was identified where purchase orders were raised before exemption forms had been approved by the Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer.

The CPRs require exemption requests to be signed by an officer with a sufficient level of delegated authority before being passed to the Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer for approval. While this process was followed in most cases, exceptions occurred where VAT was omitted from the estimated value on the exemption form. Including VAT, as required by the CPRs, sometimes moved the estimated value into a higher threshold, which affected the approval process.

The legal department are responsible for monitoring exemptions and retaining the relevant documentation. To assist with this, the team use a spreadsheet, the Central Procurement Exemption Register, to record exemption details. Our review of the spreadsheet found that this had been fully completed for each exemption granted in 2025. However, the spreadsheet did not always capture the name of the supplier, and there were inconsistencies regarding whether VAT was reflected in the exemption values.

We also reviewed the financial thresholds for procurement exemptions in the draft of the Authority's new CPRs. The new arrangements at the Authority should ensure that officers or bodies with sufficient seniority give scrutiny and approval to procurement exemptions. The level of control appears to be higher than at other similar authorities, particularly regarding exemptions valued at over both £50,000 and £150,000. The number of exemptions (13 in 2025 as per the Central Procurement Register) also means that the level of scrutiny should not be too onerous, although this could change if the number of exemptions were to significantly increase.

## OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited. Our overall opinion of the controls within the system at the time of the audit was that they provided Reasonable Assurance.

## 1 Orders are raised prior to exemptions being authorised

**Significant**

### Control weakness

Orders are being raised before procurement exemptions are authorised.

### What is the risk?

The Authority may place an order that deviates from the procurement rules without the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer's agreement.

### Findings

Under the Authority's procurement exemption process, the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) and Monitoring Officer (MO) must authorise each request prior to the order being placed, or the contract agreed. Our review identified five of the exemptions had purchase orders raised before the CFO and MO had signed the exemption request form. Although the justifications provided for these exemptions appeared legitimate, there is a risk that non-compliant orders are raised if proper review and authorisation by the CFO and MO is not carried out beforehand.

By ensuring that orders are only raised once exemptions are approved, the Authority can better ensure compliance with their Contract Procedure Rules, and that exemptions are only granted for legitimate reasons.

### Agreed action

A staff wide email will be issued reminding staff that purchase orders should not be raised until exemptions have been approved by the relevant officers in accordance with the process set out in Standing Orders Part 2 (Contract Procedure Rules) CP13 and the requesting officer notified.

The Authority Solicitor will provide a training session at the next Wider Management Team meeting, which will then be cascaded to all staff.

In addition, the Exemption Form will be amended to include a reminder that Purchase Orders should not be raised until exemptions have been approved by the relevant officers in accordance with the process set out in Standing Orders Part 2 (Contract Procedure Rules) CP13 and the requesting officer notified.

**Responsible officer:** Authority Solicitor

**Timescale:** 30 January 2026

## 2 Exclusion of VAT in contract values and authorising signatory limits

**Moderate**

### Control weakness

VAT is not being included in estimated contract exemption values leading to authorising signatory financial thresholds not being adhered to.

### What is the risk?

Exemptions are authorised by officers without sufficient financial authority.

### Findings

The Contract Procedure Rules requires exemption requests to be signed by officers with the appropriate level of authority, based upon the estimated contract value. For orders under £30,000 this is the relevant Head of Service or Moors for the Future Partnership Manager. For orders over £30,000 and below £50,000, the relevant Head of Service or Moors for the Future Partnership Manager must agree a business case with the Chief Finance Officer.

Our review identified two exemptions that had been recorded on their exemption forms as being valued at £29,964.75 and £25,690 respectively. They had been signed by the Head of Service for Planning in the first instance, and the Moors for the Future Partnership Manager in the second. However, as per the Contract Procedure Rules, VAT should be included in the total estimated value of contracts. VAT was not included in the estimated value in either of these instances. When VAT was included, the actual estimated values were £35,957.70 and £30,828. This therefore pushes the values into the next financial threshold, requiring a business case to be agreed with the Chief Finance Officer, of which we did not see any evidence.

The Authority should ensure that those requesting exemptions include VAT in the total estimated value of contracts as per the Contract Procedure Rules. Legal should also check and ensure that estimated values include VAT, and that authority thresholds are adhered to, based on the gross estimated value.

### Agreed action

A staff wide email will be issued reminding staff that the values stated in Standing Orders Part 2 (Contract Procedure Rules) are inclusive of VAT and that estimated values in exemption requests should state (1) the estimated contract value exclusive of VAT and (2) the VAT on that sum.

The Authority Solicitor will provide a training session at the next Wider Management Team meeting, which will then be

cascaded to all staff.

The Exemption Form will be amended to include (1) the estimated contract value exclusive of VAT and (2) the VAT on that sum.

The Central Procurement Exemption Register will be amended to include (1) the estimated contract value exclusive of VAT and (2) the VAT on that sum.

**Responsible officer:** Authority Solicitor

**Timescale:** 30 January 2026

### 3 Central Procurement Exemption Register

**Moderate****Control weakness**

There are inconsistencies in record keeping in the Central Procurement Exemption Register.

**What is the risk?**

The Register does not always accurately show the value of exemptions or the name of the supplier.

**Findings**

The Authority's legal department are responsible for keeping a record of procurement exemptions. They do this via the Central Procurement Exemption Register, a spreadsheet that includes the following fields: Name of Contract; Purpose of Contract; Proposed Contract Period; Total Contract Value; Category of Exemption; and Date.

Our review identified two issues:

1. **Supplier Name Not Consistently Captured**

The *Name of Contract* field did not always include the supplier's name. To improve transparency and traceability, the Authority should add a dedicated field for the supplier's name in the register.

2. **Inconsistent VAT Recording**

There were inconsistencies in how VAT was reflected in the *Total Contract Value* field. In some cases, VAT was included; in others, it was not. In one instance, the register stated that the recorded value was VAT-inclusive, while the corresponding purchase order showed that the figure was an exclusive value. The Contract Procedure Rules require that total contract values be inclusive of VAT, and the register should align with this requirement. For clarity, the net value, VAT value, and gross value should be recorded on the register.

**Agreed action**

A staff wide email will be issued reminding staff that the values stated in Standing Orders Part 2 (Contract Procedure Rules) are inclusive of VAT and that estimated values in exemption requests should state (1) the estimated contract value exclusive of VAT and (2) the VAT on that sum. Staff will also be asked to include the identity of the proposed supplier in their exemption request.

The Authority Solicitor will provide a training session at the next Wider Management Team meeting, which will be cascaded

to all staff.

The Exemption Form will be amended to include (1) the estimated contract value exclusive of VAT, (2) the VAT on that sum, and (3) the name of the proposed supplier.

The Central Procurement Exemption Register will be amended to include (1) the estimated contract value exclusive of VAT, (2) the VAT on that sum, and (3) the name of the proposed supplier.

**Responsible officer:** Authority Solicitor

**Timescale:** 30 January 2026

Audit opinions

Audit work is based on sampling transactions to test the operation of systems. It cannot guarantee the elimination of fraud or error. Our opinion is based on the risks we identify at the time of the audit. Our overall audit opinion is based on four grades of opinion, as set out below.

Opinion	Assessment of internal control
Substantial assurance	A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Reasonable assurance	There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Limited assurance	Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
No assurance	Immediate action is required to address fundamental gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

Finding ratings

Critical	A fundamental system weakness, which presents unacceptable risk to the system objectives and requires urgent attention by management.
Significant	A significant system weakness, whose impact or frequency presents risks to the system objectives, which needs to be addressed by management.
Moderate	The system objectives are not exposed to significant risk, but the issue merits attention by management.
Opportunity	There is an opportunity for improvement in efficiency or outcomes but the system objectives are not exposed to risk.

Where information resulting from audit work is made public or is provided to a third party by the client or by Veritau then this must be done on the understanding that any third party will rely on the information at its own risk. Veritau will not owe a duty of care or assume any responsibility towards anyone other than the client in relation to the information supplied. Equally, no third party may assert any rights or bring any claims against Veritau in connection with the information. Where information is provided to a named third party, the third party will keep the information confidential.

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# NEW STARTERS AND CASUAL WORKERS

PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Page 25

	Critical	Significant	Moderate	Opportunity
Findings	0	0	0	1
Overall audit opinion	<b>Substantial assurance</b>			

Status: Final

Date Issued: 5 December 2025

Responsible Officer: People Manager

## INTRODUCTION

The Peak District National Park Authority (the authority) employs approximately 225 members of staff and 213 casual workers. It is important that recruitment systems are structured effectively to attract and appoint qualified individuals who contribute to the organisation's objectives and overall performance.

To achieve this, robust controls must be in place to ensure that all employees involved in hiring are aware of, and consistently apply, the relevant policies and pre-employment checks. Adherence to these procedures supports the effective management of human resources processes, particularly in relation to the recruitment of staff and the engagement of casual workers.

The authority uses the e-recruitment system, WebRecruit Fusion. This is a partially self-serve recruitment system which allows candidates to submit standard information during the application process. Appointment processes are managed separately by the Human Resources team using the onboarding module of the system. The authority has an umbrella agreement with Derbyshire County Council provided as part of a service-level agreement to undertake the payroll function.

## OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The purpose of this audit was to provide assurance to management that procedures and controls within the system ensure that:

- ▲ Processes for the recruitment and appointment of new starters are in place and followed consistently, including the completion of pre-employment checks.
- ▲ Casual workers are appropriately appointed, and payments are correctly authorised.
- ▲ Signed contracts are retained and held securely

The audit included a review of the retention of signed employment contracts, following the recommendation by External Audit in their February 2025 report.

## KEY FINDINGS

Documented guidance and processes are in place for the recruitment and appointment of new starters, both contracted and casual workers. These cover all stages of recruitment and appointment, including pre-employment checks and the new starter payroll set-up. An internal process has been implemented on PeopleHub (human resources system) to address any late return of signed contracts and/or terms of engagement.

The online recruitment system, WebRecruit Fusion, provides an online resource that forms the recruitment/appointment checklist for both contracted employees and casual workers. Contracts and Terms of Engagement are only issued once all onboarding documents have been received. Sample testing confirmed that all documents required had been received prior to the relevant start date. There is no requirement to complete the shortlisting record and interview record electronically. Paper copies completed by recruiting managers are not consistently scanned and saved to the post recruitment folder.

Derbyshire County Council provides payroll services and set payroll timelines. The authority process requires that all new starters are authorised by the People Manager prior to being notified to the council for payroll processing. Nine out of 10 approvals in our sample were provided, but one of the casual worker approvals was missing. We determined minimal risk from other evidence supplied, however it is noted here to recognise that this lack of oversight was identified.

All rates of pay in the payrun matched those in the sample of contracted employees. For the sample of casual workers we found that four of the rates matched, however, there was one where the terms of engagement misquoted the hourly rate. We were satisfied that the rate of pay is sufficiently documented within recruitment documents and the terms of engagement that mitigates any associated risk. All contracted employees and casual workers had been set up in time for the next pay run after their start date.

Documented arrangements are in place for the storage of recruitment documents. Documents are held in personal employee folders in the HR drive. Retention timescales are detailed in the HR Retention Schedule for the different types of employment contracts. All sampled employees had signed contracts or terms of engagement held on file.

## OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited. Our overall opinion of the controls within the system at the time of the audit was that they provided Substantial Assurance.

## 1 Record keeping: Shortlisting and interview scoring

## Opportunity

### Area for potential improvement

Shortlisting and interview records are required to be completed, but they are not always completed electronically and retained on the post's recruitment file.

### What is the opportunity?

Maintaining electronic records rather than paper copy may make it easier to provide evidence and defend against legal claims of discrimination from unsuccessful candidates.

### Findings

The authority recruitment and selection guidance includes that:

*"Recruiting managers must complete the HR-RS5 Shortlisting record and send a copy to HR before inviting any candidates to interview, so that HR can carry out the relevant checks. The record will be retained for 6 months by Human Resources after the conclusion of the recruitment."*

And, that managers:

*"should use the HR-RS6 Interview record to record the interview scoring."*

We confirmed that the shortlisting and interview records for the sample of recruitments tested had been supplied to HR and had been retained in line with the 6-month retention timescales. However, we found that managers were not supplying scanned or electronic versions of these records for the recruitment/post file. None of the copies in the sample were saved to the recruitment folders and all were in paper format, securely stored within the HR office.

### Agreed action

Managers will be requested to supply electronic copies of the recruitment shortlisting and interview records that HR will then save to the appropriate recruitment folder.

**Responsible officer:** People Manager

**Timescale:** 31 December 2025

Audit opinions

Audit work is based on sampling transactions to test the operation of systems. It cannot guarantee the elimination of fraud or error. Our opinion is based on the risks we identify at the time of the audit. Our overall audit opinion is based on four grades of opinion, as set out below.

Opinion	Assessment of internal control
Substantial assurance	A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Reasonable assurance	There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Limited assurance	Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
No assurance	Immediate action is required to address fundamental gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

Finding ratings

Critical	A fundamental system weakness, which presents unacceptable risk to the system objectives and requires urgent attention by management.
Significant	A significant system weakness, whose impact or frequency presents risks to the system objectives, which needs to be addressed by management.
Moderate	The system objectives are not exposed to significant risk, but the issue merits attention by management.
Opportunity	There is an opportunity for improvement in efficiency or outcomes but the system objectives are not exposed to risk.

Where information resulting from audit work is made public or is provided to a third party by the client or by Veritau then this must be done on the understanding that any third party will rely on the information at its own risk. Veritau will not owe a duty of care or assume any responsibility towards anyone other than the client in relation to the information supplied. Equally, no third party may assert any rights or bring any claims against Veritau in connection with the information. Where information is provided to a named third party, the third party will keep the information confidential.

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## **EXTERNAL AUDIT – 2025/26 AUDIT STRATEGY**

### **1. Purpose**

This report asks Members to consider the 2025/26 External Audit Strategy Memorandum from our External Auditors, Mazars. Jennie Norman, Audit Manager at Mazars will be at the Authority meeting to present the Memorandum and to answer any questions

### **2. Context**

2.1 The External Auditor presents the Strategy for auditing the financial statements and value for money arrangements annually in advance of the audit of the financial statements, in this case it is for the 2025/26 financial statements.

2.2 Achieving unqualified opinions from the External Auditor is a critical success factor for the Authority

### **3. Proposals**

3.1 Members are asked to consider the External Audit Strategy Memorandum for 2025/26 (Appendix 1). The Strategy outlines the scope of the work proposed and the External Auditor's assessment of audit risks and key judgement areas for the audit of financial statements and the value for money conclusion for 2025/26.

### **4. Recommendations**

4.1 That the 2025/26 External Audit Strategy Memorandum for the 2025/26 Statement of Financial accounts be noted.

### **5. Corporate Implications**

#### **a. Legal**

Pursuant to section 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Authority must appoint a local auditor to audit its accounts for a financial year not later than 31<sup>st</sup> December in the preceding financial year. The Memorandum of Understanding in place with the External Auditor sets out how they will undertake their work.

#### **b. Financial**

The cost of the External Audit Service contract is found from within the overall Finance budget for 2025/26. Additional budget has been allocated as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26. Fees have increased year on year by 2.8% and the forecasted cost is estimated at £53k for 2025/26. This increase has been agreed and authorised by the PSAA (Public Sector Audit Appointments). Further fee variations may also be charged to the Authority, on completion of the Audit.

c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan

The work of the External Auditors is a key part of our governance arrangements and helps us to monitor and improve performance against our ambition in the Authority Plan to be a financially resilient organisation and provide value for money. Achieving an unqualified opinion from the External Auditor is part of the target for Objective D (Financial Resilience)

d. Risk Management

The scrutiny and advice provided by External Audit is part of our governance framework. The External Auditor's work is based on an assessment of audit risk as explained in the External Auditors report at Appendix 1.

e. Net Zero

PDNPA finance team and Mazars aim to manage the majority of the audit virtually, with minimal onsite meetings, thus reducing the associated emissions caused by business travel.

**6. Background papers (not previously published)**

None.

**7. Appendices**

Appendix 1: 2025/26 External Audit Strategy Memorandum

**Report Author and Responsible Officer, Job Title and Publication Date**

Author: Sinead Butler, Finance Manager & Chief Financial Officer. Responsible Officer: Emily Fox, Head of Resources 06/03/2026



# Audit Strategy Memorandum

## Peak District National Park Authority – Year ending 31 March 2026

March 2026

Peak District National Park Authority

Aldern House

Baslow Road

Bakewell

Derbyshire

DE45 1AE

27<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Forvis Mazars  
One St Peter's Square  
Manchester  
M2 3DE

Dear Authority Members,

## Audit Strategy Memorandum – Year ending 31 March 2026

We are pleased to present our Audit Strategy Memorandum for Peak District National Park Authority for the year ending 31 March 2026.

This report summarises our audit approach, including the significant audit risks and areas of key judgement we have identified, and provides details of our audit team. In addition, as it is a fundamental requirement that an auditor is, and is seen to be, independent of an audited entity, the section of the report titled '*Confirmation of our independence*' summarises our considerations and conclusions on our independence as auditors.

Two-way communication with you is key to a successful audit and is important in:

- Reaching a mutual understanding of the scope of the audit and our respective responsibilities;
- Sharing information to assist each of us to fulfil our respective responsibilities;
- Providing you with constructive observations arising during the audit process; and
- Ensuring that we, as external auditors, gain an understanding of your attitude and views in respect of the internal and external operational, financial, compliance, and other risks facing Peak District National Park Authority which may affect the audit, including the likelihood of those risks materialising and how they are monitored and managed.

With that in mind, this report, which has been prepared following our initial planning discussions with management, facilitates a discussion with you on our audit approach. We welcome any questions, concerns, or input you may have on our approach or role as auditor.

This report also contains appendices that outline our key communications with you during the audit, and forthcoming accounting issues and other issues that may be of interest to you.

Providing a high-quality service is extremely important to us and we strive to provide technical excellence with the highest level of service quality, together with continuous improvement to exceed your expectations. If you have any concerns or comments about this report or our audit approach, please contact us on +44 (0)7909 985324.

This report was prepared solely for the use and benefit of Authority Members and to the fullest extent permitted by law Forvis Mazars LLP accepts no responsibility and disclaims all liability to any third party who purports to use or rely for any reason whatsoever on the report, its contents, conclusions, any extract, reinterpretation, amendment and/or modification. Accordingly, any reliance placed on the report, its contents, conclusions, any extract, reinterpretation, amendment and/or modification by any third party is entirely at their own risk.

Yours faithfully,



Daniel Watson, Key Audit Partner

**Forvis Mazars**

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- 08 Confirmation of our independence
  
- Appendix A – Key communication points

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This document is to be regarded as confidential to Peak District National Park Authority. It has been prepared for the sole use of Authority Members as those charged with governance. No responsibility is accepted to any other person in respect of the whole or part of its contents.



## Engagement and responsibilities summary

# Engagement and responsibilities summary

We are appointed to perform the external audit of Peak District National Park Authority (the “Authority”) for the year to 31 March 2026. The scope of our engagement is set out in the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies, issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) available from the PSAA website: [Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies from 2023/24](#). Our responsibilities are principally derived from the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office (NAO), as outlined below.

## Audit opinion

We are responsible for forming and expressing an opinion on whether the financial statements are prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.

Our audit does not relieve management or members of the Peak District National Park Authority, as those charged with governance, of their responsibilities.

The Finance Manager is responsible for the assessment of the Authority’s ability to continue as a going concern. As auditors, we are required to obtain sufficient, appropriate audit evidence regarding, and conclude on:

- a) whether a material uncertainty related to going concern exists, and
- b) the appropriateness of the Finance Manager’s use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements.

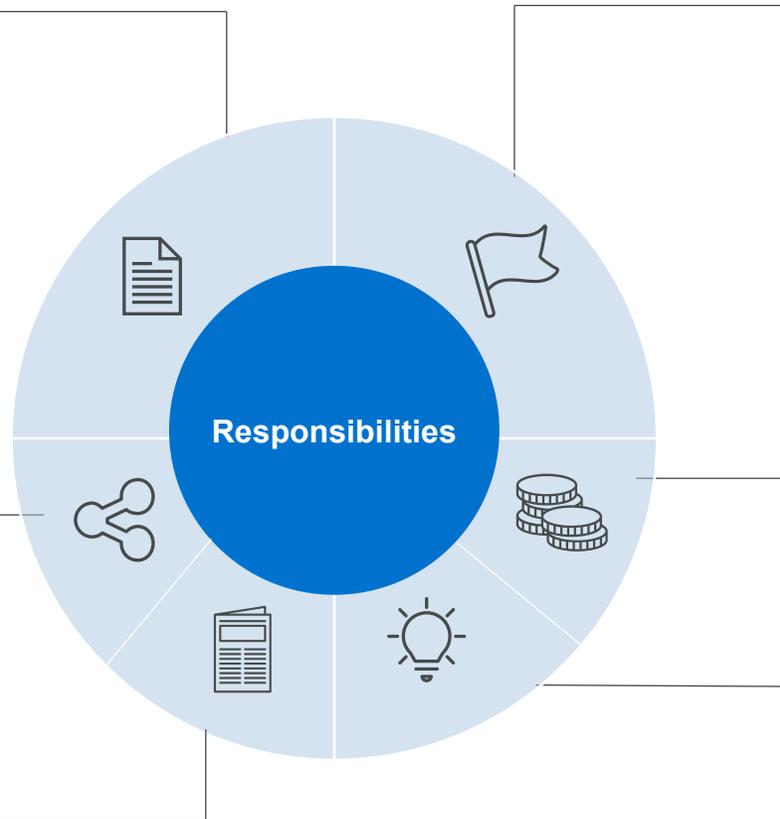
## Internal control

Management is responsible for such internal control as they determine necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

We are responsible for obtaining an understanding of internal control relevant to our audit and the preparation of the financial statements to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Authority’s internal control.

## Whole of Government Accounts

We report to the NAO on the consistency of the Authority’s financial statements with its Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) submission.



## Fraud

The responsibility for safeguarding assets and for the prevention and detection of fraud, error, and non-compliance with law or regulations rests with both you and management. This includes establishing and maintaining internal controls over asset protection, compliance with relevant laws and regulations, and the reliability of financial reporting.

As part of our audit procedures in relation to fraud, we are required to inquire of you and key management personnel (including internal audit) on their knowledge of instances of fraud, and their views on the risks of fraud and on internal controls that mitigate those risks. In accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), we plan and perform our audit to obtain reasonable assurance that the financial statements taken as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. However, our audit should not be relied upon to identify all such misstatements.

## Value for money

We are also responsible for forming a view on the arrangements that the Authority has in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We discuss our approach to Value for Money work further in the ‘Value for Money’ section of this report.

## Wider reporting and electors’ rights

The 2014 Act requires us to give an elector, or any representative of the elector, the opportunity to question us about the accounts of the Authority and consider objections made to the accounts. We also have a broad range of reporting responsibilities and powers that are unique to the audit of local authorities in the United Kingdom.

# 02

Your audit team

# Your audit team

A summary of key team members is detailed below:

Who	Role	E-mail
Daniel Watson	Partner	<a href="mailto:daniel.watson@mazars.co.uk">daniel.watson@mazars.co.uk</a>
Jennie Norman	Manager	<a href="mailto:jennifer.norman@mazars.co.uk">jennifer.norman@mazars.co.uk</a>



# 03

## Audit scope, approach, and timeline

# Audit scope, approach, and timeline

## Risk-based Approach



# Audit scope, approach, and timeline

## Audit scope

Our audit approach is designed to provide an audit that complies with all professional requirements.

Our audit of the financial statements will be conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), relevant ethical and professional standards, our own audit methodology, and in accordance with Code of Audit Practice. Our work is focused on those aspects of your business which we consider to have a higher risk of material misstatement, such as those impacted by management judgement and estimation, application of new accounting standards, changes of accounting policy, changes to operations, or areas found to contain material errors in the past.

## Audit approach

Our audit approach is risk-based, and the nature, extent, and timing of our audit procedures are primarily driven by the areas of the financial statements we consider to be more susceptible to material misstatement. Following our risk assessment where we assess inherent risk factors (subjectivity, complexity, uncertainty, change and susceptibility to misstatement due to management bias or fraud), we develop our audit strategy and design audit procedures to respond to the risks we have identified.

If we conclude that appropriately-designed controls are in place, we may plan to test and rely on those controls. If we decide controls are not appropriately designed, or we decide that it would be more efficient to do so, we may take a wholly substantive approach to our audit testing where, in our professional judgement, substantive procedures alone will provide sufficient appropriate audit evidence. Substantive procedures are audit procedures designed to detect material misstatements at the assertion level and comprise tests of detail (of classes of transaction, account balances, and disclosures), and substantive analytical procedures. Irrespective of our assessed risks of material misstatement, which takes account of our evaluation of the operating effectiveness of controls, we are required to design and perform substantive procedures for each material class of transaction, account balance, and disclosure.

Our audit has been planned and will be performed to provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement and give a true and fair view. The concept of materiality and how we define a misstatement is explained in the *'Materiality and misstatements'* section of this report.

The diagram on the next page outlines the procedures we perform at the different stages of our audit.

## Management's and our experts

Management makes use of experts in specific areas when preparing the Authority's financial statements. We also use experts to assist us to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence on specific items of account.

Item of account	Management's expert	Our expert
IAS 19 Employee Benefits	Hymans Roberston LLP	PwC (appointed by the NAO as consulting actuary for LGPS)
PPE Valuations	Valuation Office Agency	None
IFRS16 Right-of-Use Asset Valuations	Jonathan V Davies Chartered Surveyors	None

## Service organisations

International Auditing Standards (UK) (ISAs) define service organisations as third party organisations that provide services to the Authority that are part of its information systems relevant to financial reporting. We are required to obtain an understanding of the services provided by service organisations as well as evaluating the design and implementation of controls over those services. The table below summarises the service organisations used by the Authority and our planned audit approach.

Item of account	Service organisation	Audit approach
Employee Expenses	Derbyshire County Council - Payroll services	Derbyshire County Council provides payroll services to the Authority, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Payroll calculations</li> <li>Payroll summaries including deductions calculations</li> <li>Monthly payslips for employees</li> </ul> We will take a fully substantive approach (i.e. no reliance on operating effectiveness of controls) by vouching a sample of payroll transactions to supporting documentation and recalculating employer's NI and pensions contributions.

# Audit scope, approach, and timeline



# 04

## Materiality and misstatements

# Materiality and misstatements

## Definitions

Materiality is an expression of the relative significance or importance of a particular matter in the context of the financial statements as a whole.

Misstatements in the financial statements are considered to be material if they could, individually or in aggregate, reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users based on the financial statements.

## Materiality

We determine materiality for the financial statements as a whole (overall materiality) using a benchmark that, in our professional judgement, is most appropriate to entity. We also determine an amount less than materiality (performance materiality), which is applied when we carry out our audit procedures and is designed to reduce to an appropriately low level the probability that the aggregate of uncorrected and undetected misstatements exceeds overall materiality. Further, we set a threshold above which all misstatements we identify during our audit (adjusted and unadjusted) will be reported to Authority members.

Judgements on materiality are made in light of surrounding circumstances and are affected by the size and nature of a misstatement, or a combination of both. Judgements about materiality are based on a consideration of the common financial information needs of users as a group and not on specific individual users.

An assessment of what is material is a matter of professional judgement and is affected by our perception of the financial information needs of the users of the financial statements. In making our assessment we assume that users:

- Have a reasonable knowledge of business, economic activities, and accounts;
- Have a willingness to study the information in the financial statements with reasonable diligence;
- Understand that financial statements are prepared, presented, and audited to levels of materiality;
- Recognise the uncertainties inherent in the measurement of amounts based on the use of estimates, judgement, and consideration of future events; and
- Will make reasonable economic decisions based on the information in the financial statements.

We consider overall materiality and performance materiality while planning and performing our audit based on quantitative and qualitative factors.

When planning our audit, we make judgements about the size of misstatements we consider to be material. This provides a basis for our risk assessment procedures, including identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement, and determining the nature, timing and extent of our responses to those risks.

The overall materiality and performance materiality that we determine does not necessarily mean that uncorrected misstatements that are below materiality, individually or in aggregate, will be considered immaterial.

We revise materiality as our audit progresses should we become aware of information that would have caused us to determine a different amount had we been aware of that information at the planning stage.

# Materiality and misstatements

## Materiality (continued)

We consider that gross expenditure at surplus/deficit level is the key focus of users of the financial statements and, as such, we base our materiality levels around this benchmark.

We expect to set a materiality threshold of 2% of gross revenue expenditure at surplus/deficit level.

As set out in the table below, based on currently available information (the prior year audited statement of accounts) we anticipate overall materiality for the year ended 31 March 2026 to be in the region of £0.401m and performance materiality to be in the region of £0.320m.

We will continue to monitor materiality throughout our audit to ensure it is set at an appropriate level.

	2025-26 £'000s	2024-25 £'000s
Overall materiality	401	401
Performance materiality	320	301
Clearly trivial	12	12
Specific materiality – Senior Officers' Remuneration	5	5

## Misstatements

We will accumulate misstatements identified during our audit that are above our determined clearly trivial threshold.

We have set a clearly trivial threshold for individual misstatements we identify (a reporting threshold) for reporting to you and management that is consistent with a threshold where misstatements below that amount would not need to be accumulated because we expect that the accumulation of such amounts would not have a material effect on the financial statements.

Based on our preliminary assessment of overall materiality, our proposed clearly trivial threshold is £12k, based on 3% of overall materiality. If you have any queries about this, please raise these with me.

Each misstatement above the reporting threshold that we identify will be classified as:

- **Adjusted:** Those misstatements that we identify and are corrected by management.
- **Unadjusted:** Those misstatements that we identify that are not corrected by management.

We will report all misstatements above the reporting threshold to management and request that they are corrected. If they are not corrected, we will report each misstatement to you as unadjusted misstatements and, if they remain uncorrected, we will communicate the effect that they may have individually, or in aggregate, on our audit opinion.

Misstatements also cover qualitative misstatements and include quantitative and qualitative misstatements and omissions relating to the notes of the financial statements.

## Reporting

In summary, we will categorise and report misstatements above the reporting threshold to you as follows:

- Adjusted misstatements;
- Unadjusted misstatements; and
- Disclosure misstatements (adjusted and unadjusted).

# 05

## Significant risks and other key judgement areas

# Significant risks and other key judgement areas

Following the risk assessment approach set out in the *'Audit scope, approach, and timeline'* section, we have identified the risks of material misstatement in the financial statements. These risks are categorised as significant, enhanced, or standard. The definitions of these risk ratings are set out below.

## Significant risk

A risk that is assessed as being at or close to the upper end of the spectrum of inherent risk, based on a combination of the likelihood of a misstatement occurring and the magnitude of any potential misstatement. As required by auditing standards, a fraud risk is always assessed as a significant risk.

## Enhanced risk

An area with an elevated risk of material misstatement at the assertion level, other than a significant risk, based on factors/ information inherent to that area. Enhanced risks require additional consideration but do not rise to the level of a significant risk. These include but are not limited to:

- Key areas of management judgement and estimation uncertainty, including accounting estimates related to material classes of transaction, account balances, and disclosures but which are not considered to give rise to a significant risk of material misstatement; and
- Risks relating to other assertions and arising from significant events or transactions that occurred during the period.

## Standard risk

A risk related to assertions over classes of transaction, account balances, and disclosures that are relatively routine, non-complex, tend to be subject to systematic processing, and require little or no management judgement/ estimation. Although it is considered that there is a risk of material misstatement, there are no elevated or special factors related to the nature of the financial statement area, the likely magnitude of potential misstatements, or the likelihood of a risk occurring.

# Significant risks and other key judgement areas

## Audit risks and planned responses

In this section, we have set out the risks that we deem to be significant and enhanced, and our planned response. An audit is a dynamic process, and should we change our view of risk and/ or our approach to address those risks during our audit, we will report this to Authority Members.

## Significant risks

	Risk name	Fraud	Error	Judgement	Planned response
Page 49	<p>1 <b>Valuation of the Net Defined Benefit Pension Asset/Obligation</b></p> <p>The defined benefit liability relating to the Local Government pension scheme represents a significant balance on the Authority's balance sheet.</p> <p>The Authority uses an actuary to provide an annual valuation of these liabilities in line with the requirements of IAS 19 Employee Benefits.</p> <p>Due to the high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with this valuation, we have determined there is a significant risk in this area.</p>	○	○	●	<p>We plan to address the risk by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessing the skills, experience, objectivity and independence of the Pension Fund's actuary;</li> <li>Obtaining confirmation from the auditors of Derbyshire Pension Fund that appropriate controls have been designed and implemented to prevent and detect material misstatement. This will include reviewing the processes and controls used to ensure data provided to the Actuary by the Pension Fund for the IAS 19 valuation is complete and accurate;</li> <li>Evaluating and challenging the work performed by the Derbyshire Pension Fund auditor on the Fund's investment assets, and considering whether the outcomes would materially impact our consideration of the Authority's share of Pension Fund assets;</li> <li>Reviewing the actuarial allocation of Pension Fund assets to the Authority including comparing the Authority's allocated share to other corroborative information;</li> <li>Reviewing the appropriateness of the Pension Asset and Liability valuation methodologies applied by the Pension Fund Actuary, and the key assumptions included within the valuation. This will include comparing them to expected ranges, utilising information by the consulting actuary engaged by the National Audit Office;</li> <li>Agreeing the data in the IAS 19 valuation report provided by the Fund Actuary to the pension accounting entries and disclosures in the Authority's financial statements; and</li> <li>Reviewing and challenging the Authority's assessment, under the requirements of IFRIC14, of its Pension surplus if applicable, and confirming that the accounting treatment is appropriate and reasonable.</li> <li>Obtaining assurances from the auditor of the Derbyshire Pension Fund in relation to the underlying data supporting the Triennial Valuation of Derbyshire Pension Fund.</li> </ul>

# Significant risks and other key judgement areas

## Significant risks

	Risk name	Fraud	Error	Judgement	Planned response
Page 50	<p>2 <b>Management override of controls</b> (a mandatory significant risk for all entities).</p> <p>Management at various levels within an organisation are in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur there is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud on all audits. You should assess this risk as part of your oversight of the financial reporting process.</p>	●	○	●	<p>In line with our methodology, we plan to address the management override of controls risk through performing audit work over:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accounting estimates;</li> <li>• journal entries; and</li> <li>• significant transactions outside the normal course of business or otherwise unusual.</li> </ul>
	<p>3 <b>Valuation of Land &amp; Buildings</b></p> <p>Land and buildings assets are a significant balance on the Authority's balance sheet. The valuation of these properties is complex and is subject to a number of management assumptions and judgements. Due to the high degree of estimation uncertainty associated, we have determined there is a significant risk in this area.</p>	○	●	●	<p>We plan to address this risk by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critically assessing the scope of work, qualifications, objectivity and independence of the Authority's valuer to carry out the required programme of revaluations;</li> <li>• Considering whether the overall revaluation methodologies used by the Authority's valuers are in line with industry practice, the CIPFA code of practice and the Authority's accounting policies;</li> <li>• Testing a sample of valuations carried out in the year to confirm they have been carried out on the correct basis and that the underlying judgements are based on relevant inputs and are reasonable;</li> <li>• Assessing whether valuation movements are in line with market expectations by considering valuation trends; and</li> <li>• Critically assessing the approach that the Authority adopts to ensure that assets that are not subject to revaluation in 2025/26 are materially correct, including considering the robustness of that approach in light of the valuation information reported by the Authority's valuers.</li> </ul>

# Significant risks and other key judgement areas

## Other considerations

In consideration of ISA (UK) 260 *Communication with Those Charged with Governance*, we would like to seek your views/ knowledge of the following matters:

- Did you identify any other risks (business, laws & regulation, fraud, going concern etc.) that may result in material misstatements?
- Are you aware of any significant communications between Peak District National Park Authority and regulators?
- Are there any matters that you consider warrant particular attention during the course of our audit, and any areas where you would like additional procedures to be undertaken?

We plan to do this by formal letter to Authority members which we will obtain prior to completing our audit.

## Significant difficulties encountered during the course of audit

In accordance with ISA (UK) 260 *Communication with Those Charged with Governance*, we are required to communicate certain matters to you which include, but are not limited to, significant difficulties, if any, that are encountered during our audit. Such difficulties may include matters such as:

- Significant delays in management providing information that we require to perform our audit.
- An unnecessarily brief time within which to complete our audit.
- Extensive and unexpected effort to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence.
- Unavailability of expected information.
- Restrictions imposed on us by management.
- Unwillingness by management to make or extend their assessment of an entity's ability to continue as a going concern when requested.

We will highlight to you on a timely basis should we encounter any such difficulties (if our audit process is unduly impeded, this could require us to issue a modified auditor's report).

## Internal audit function

We do not expect to use the work of the internal audit function for the purpose of our audit. Nonetheless, we will obtain a copy of the reports issued by internal audit relating to the financial period under audit determine whether any findings will have an impact on our risk assessment and planned audit procedures.

# 06

Value for Money

# Value for money

## The framework for value for money work

We are required to form a view as to whether the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The NAO issues guidance to auditors that underpins the work we are required to carry out in order to form our view and sets out the overall criterion and sub-criteria that we are required to consider.

This will be the second audit year where we are undertaking our value for money (VFM) work under the full 2024 Code of Audit Practice (the Code). Our responsibility remains to be satisfied that the Authority has proper arrangements in place, and to report in the auditor's report where we are not satisfied that arrangements are in place. Where we have issued a recommendation in relation to a significant weaknesses this indicates we are not satisfied that arrangements are in place. Separately we provide a commentary on the Authority's arrangements in the Auditor's Annual Report.

A key change in the 2024 Code of Audit Practice is the requirement for us to issue our Auditor's Annual Report for the year ending 31st March 2026 to you in draft by the 30th November 2026. This is required whether our audit is complete or not. Should our work not be complete, we will report the status of our work and any findings to you up to that point (and since the issue of our previous Auditor's Annual Report). Further information will be provided in Appendix A.

## Specified reporting criteria

The Code requires us to structure our commentary to report under three specified criteria:

1. **Financial sustainability** – how the Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
2. **Governance** – how the Authority ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
3. **Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness** – how the Authority uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

## Our approach

Our work falls into three primary phases as outlined opposite. We gather sufficient evidence to support our commentary on the Authority's arrangements and to identify and report on any significant weaknesses in arrangements. Where significant weaknesses are identified, we are required to report these to the Authority and make recommendations for improvement. Such recommendations can be made at any point during the audit cycle, and we are not expected to wait until issuing our overall commentary to do so.

Planning	Obtaining an understanding of the Authority's arrangements for each specified reporting criteria. Relevant information sources will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NAO guidance and supporting information</li><li>• Information from internal and external sources including regulators</li><li>• Knowledge from previous audits and other audit work undertaken in the year</li><li>• Interviews and discussions with staff and members</li></ul>
Additional risk based procedures and evaluation	Where our planning work identifies risks of significant weaknesses, we will undertake additional procedures to determine whether there is a significant weakness.
Reporting	We will provide a summary of the work we have undertaken and our judgements against each of the specified reporting criteria as part of our commentary on arrangements which forms part of the Auditor's Annual Report. Our commentary will also highlight: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Significant weaknesses identified and our recommendations for improvement; and</li><li>• Emerging issues or other matters that do not represent significant weaknesses but still require attention from the Authority.</li></ul>

07

Audit fees and other services

# Audit fees and other services

## Fees for work as the Authority’s appointed auditor

Our fees (exclusive of VAT) as the Authority’s appointed for the year ended 31 March 2026 are outlined below.

Our fees are designed to reflect the time, professional experience, and expertise required to perform our audit.

Area of work	2025-26 Proposed Fee	2024-25 Actual Fee
Code Audit Work (Scale Fee)	£52,650	£51,215
Additional work relating to the implementation of IFRS 16 Leases*		£12,006
<b>Total</b>	<b>£52,650</b>	<b>£63,221</b>

\*This fee variation is currently with PSAA for final approval

# 08

## Confirmation of our independence

# Confirmation of our independence

## Requirements

We comply with the International Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants, including International Independence Standards issued by the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants together with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK reflected in the ICAEW Code of Ethics and the FRC Revised Ethical Standard.

## Compliance

We are not aware of any relationship between Forvis Mazars and Peak District National Park Authority that, in our professional judgement, may reasonably be thought to impair our independence.

We are independent of Peak District National Park Authority and have fulfilled our independence and ethical responsibilities in accordance with the requirements applicable to our audit.

## Non-audit and Audit fees

We have set out a summary of the non-audit services provided by Forvis Mazars (with related fees) to Peak District National Park Authority, together with our audit fees and independence assessment.

We are committed to independence and confirm that we comply with the FRC's Revised Ethical Standard. In addition, we have set out in this section any matters or relationships we believe may have a bearing on our independence or the objectivity of our audit team.

Based on the information provided by you and our own internal procedures to safeguard our independence as auditors, we confirm that in our professional judgement there are no relationships between us and any of our related or subsidiary entities, and you and your related entities, that create any unacceptable threats to our independence within the regulatory or professional requirements governing us as your auditors.

We have policies and procedures in place that are designed to ensure that we carry out our work with integrity, objectivity, and independence. These policies include:

- All partners and staff are required to complete an annual independence declaration.
- All new partners and staff are required to complete an independence confirmation and complete annual ethical training.
- Rotation policies covering audit engagement partners and other key members of the audit team.
- Use by managers and partners of our client and engagement acceptance system, which requires all non-audit services to be approved in advance by the audit engagement partner.

We confirm, as at the date of this report, that the engagement team and others in the firm as appropriate, Forvis Mazars LLP are independent and comply with relevant ethical requirements. However, if at any time you have concerns or questions about our integrity, objectivity or independence, please discuss these with us in the first instance.

Prior to the provision of any non-audit services, we will undertake appropriate procedures to consider and fully assess the impact that providing the service may have on our independence as auditor.

Principal threats to our independence and the associated safeguards we have identified and/ or put in place are set out in Terms of Appointment issued by PSAA available from the PSAA website: [Terms of Appointment from 1 July 2021 - PSAA](#). Any emerging independence threats and associated identified safeguards will be communicated in our Audit Completion Report.

# Appendices

A: Key communication points

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# Appendix A: Key communication points

We value communication with Authority, as a two-way feedback process is at the heart of our client service commitment. The Code of Audit Practice as well as ISA (UK) 260 *Communication with Those Charged with Governance* and ISA (UK) 265 *Communicating Deficiencies In Internal Control To Those Charged With Governance And Management* specifically require us to communicate a number of matters with you. We meet these requirements, principally, through presenting the following documents to you:

- Our Audit Strategy Memorandum;
- Our Audit Completion Report; and
- Our Auditor's Annual Report.

These documents will be discussed with management prior to being presented to you and their comments will be incorporated as appropriate.

Relevant points that need to be communicated with you at each stage of the audit are outlined below.

## Key communication points at the planning stage as included in this Audit Strategy Memorandum

- Our responsibilities in relation to the audit of the financial statements;
- The planned scope and timing of the audit;
- Significant audit risks and areas of management judgement;
- Our commitment to independence;
- Responsibilities for preventing and detecting errors;
- Materiality and misstatements; and
- Fees for audit and other services.

## Key communication points at the completion stage to be included in our Audit Completion Report

- Significant deficiencies in internal control;
- Significant findings from the audit;
- Significant matters discussed with management;
- Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit;
- Qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting practices, including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures;
- Our conclusions on the significant audit risks and areas of management judgement;
- Summary of misstatements;
- Management representation letter;
- Our proposed draft audit report; and
- Independence.

## Changes introduced by the 2024 Code of Audit Practice

The 2024 Code now requires the auditor to issue the draft Auditor's Annual Report by 30<sup>th</sup> November following each year end. For the 2025/26 audit, this means that we must issue our draft Auditor's Annual Report by 30 November 2026, whether our audit is complete or not.

In instances where our audit work is not complete by 30 November for any given year, the 2024 Code requires us to provide a summary of the status of the audit at the time of issuance and should reflect the work completed to date since we issued our previous Auditor's Annual Report. In such instances, we will issue an Interim Auditor's Annual Report to meet the 30 November deadline. On completion of any outstanding financial statement audit work or Value for Money arrangements work, we will re-issue the Auditor's Annual Report which will include an updated commentary on Value for Money arrangements.

# Appendix A: Key communication points

ISA (UK) 260 *Communication with Those Charged with Governance*, ISA (UK) 265 *Communicating Deficiencies In Internal Control To Those Charged With Governance And Management* and other ISAs (UK) specifically require us to communicate the following:

Required communication	Where addressed
Our responsibilities in relation to the financial statement audit and those of management and Those Charged with Governance.	Audit Strategy Memorandum
The planned scope and timing of the audit including any limitations, specifically including with respect to significant risks.	Audit Strategy Memorandum
With respect to misstatements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion;</li> <li>• The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods;</li> <li>• A request that any uncorrected misstatement is corrected; and</li> <li>• In writing, corrected misstatements that are significant.</li> </ul>	Audit Completion Report
With respect to fraud communications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquiries with Authority Members to determine whether you have knowledge of any actual, suspected, or alleged fraud affecting the entity;</li> <li>• Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that fraud may exist; and</li> <li>• A discussion of any other matters related to fraud.</li> </ul>	Audit Completion Report and discussion at Authority meeting(s), audit planning meeting(s), and audit clearance meeting(s)

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# Appendix A: Key communication points

Required communication	Where addressed
<p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity’s related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-disclosure by management;</li> <li>• Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions;</li> <li>• Disagreement over disclosures;</li> <li>• Non-compliance with laws and regulations; and</li> <li>• Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity.</li> </ul>	<p>Audit Completion Report</p>
<p>Significant findings from the audit including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures;</li> <li>• Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit;</li> <li>• Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management or were the subject of correspondence with management;</li> <li>• Written representations that we are seeking;</li> <li>• Expected modifications to the audit report; and</li> <li>• Other matters, if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process or otherwise identified in the course of the audit that we believe will be relevant to the Authority in the context of fulfilling your responsibilities.</li> </ul>	<p>Audit Completion Report</p>

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## Appendix A: Key communication points

Required communication	Where addressed
Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit.	Audit Completion Report
Where relevant, any issues identified with respect to the Authority to obtain external confirmations or inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures.	Audit Completion Report
Audit findings regarding non-compliance with laws and regulations where the non-compliance is material and believed to be intentional (subject to compliance with legislation on tipping off) and inquiry of Authority into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements that Authority may be aware of.	Audit Completion Report and Authority meeting(s)
<p>With respect to going concern, events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <p>Page 62</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty;</li> <li>• Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements; and</li> <li>• The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements.</li> </ul>	Audit Completion Report
<p>Communication regarding our system of quality management, compliant with ISQM (UK) 1, developed to support the consistent performance of quality audit engagements. To address the requirements of ISQM (UK) 1, our firm's System of Quality Management team completes, as part of an ongoing and iterative process, a number of key steps to assess and conclude on our firm's System of Quality Management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure there is an appropriate assignment of responsibilities under ISQM (UK) 1 and across Leadership</li> <li>• Establish and review quality objectives each year, ensuring ISQM (UK) 1 objectives align with the firm's strategies and priorities</li> <li>• Identify, review, and update quality risks each quarter, taking into consideration the number of input sources (such as FRC / ICAEW review findings, internal monitoring findings, findings from our firm's root cause analysis and remediation functions, etc.)</li> <li>• Identify, design, and implement responses as part of the process to strengthen our firm's internal control environment and overall quality</li> <li>• Evaluate responses and remediate control gaps or deficiencies</li> </ul> <p>We perform an evaluation of our system of quality management on an annual basis. Our first evaluation was performed as of 31 August 2023. Details of that assessment and our conclusion are set out in our 2022/2023 Transparency Report, which is available on our website <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>The details of our evaluation of our system of quality management as of 31 August 2024, and our conclusion, set out in our 2023/24 Transparency Report, which is available on our website <a href="#">here</a>.</p>	Audit Strategy Memorandum

# Contact

## Forvis Mazars

**Daniel Watson**

**Partner**

Tel: : +44 (0)7909 985324

daniel.watson@mazars.com

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## **RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY**

### **1. Purpose**

1.1 For Members to approve the updated Risk Management Policy at Appendix 1.

### **2. Context**

2.1 As a Best Value Authority under the Local Government Act 1999 we have a duty to seek continuous improvement in the way in which we exercise our functions and deliver our services, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

2.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which include arrangements for the management of risk.

2.3 The Authority approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance in February 2017 which is consistent with the CIPFA/ SOLACE (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy/ Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (minute reference 5/17).

2.4 Core Principle F in the Code of Corporate Governance is *Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management*, which includes sub principle F(1) of *Managing risk*.

2.5 The Risk Management Policy represents the Authority's underlying approach to risk management. The Authority's Risk Management Policy was last revised and approved by Members in November 2023 (minute reference 94/23).

### **3. Proposals**

3.1 An updated Risk Management Policy has been prepared which seeks to further the Code of Corporate Governance Principles outlined above.

3.2 This has been prepared to incorporate recommendations from Internal Audit and has been updated according to feedback from Members.

3.3 The updated Risk Management Policy includes the following updates:

3.3.1 Creation of a Risk Management Framework to further detail the Authority's risk procedures, including frequency and timeline of actions, and accompanying training to support risk managers to carry out their roles.

3.3.2 Clarification of roles within the risk management process, including distributing responsibility for service risk management actions to the Wider Management Team.

3.3.3 Updates to the process for, and schedule of, risk monitoring and reporting.

3.4 Members are asked to approve the revised Risk Management Policy, as detailed in Appendix 1.

### **4. Recommendations**

**1. The updated Risk Management Policy at Appendix 1 is approved.**

### **5. Corporate Implications**

a. Legal

As contained in this report.

- b. Financial  
All work covered by the Risk Management Policy is undertaken within existing service budgets.
- c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan  
This policy will support the delivery of the National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan by assessing delivery and operational risks.
- d. Risk Management  
The policy forms the foundation of the Authority's approach to risk management.
- e. Net Zero  
No direct implications.

**6. Background papers (not previously published)**

None.

**7. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Risk Management Policy 2026

**Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date**

Emmott Baddeley, Data, Strategy and Performance Officer, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026  
emmott.baddeley@peakdistrict.gov.uk

**Responsible Officer, Job Title**

Emily Fox, Head of Resources

# Risk Management Policy

Updated February 2026



## Contents

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## Purpose of this document

1. This Risk Management Policy ('the policy') sets out how the Peak District National Park Authority ('the Authority') will effectively identify and manage potential risk to the place of the Peak District National Park, the delivery of the National Park Management Plan, and the operations of the Authority;
2. The policy supports one of the core principles in the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance (approved at Authority, February 2017) of 'Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management'.
3. The policy explains the Authority's underlying approach to risk management and documents the roles and responsibilities of:
  - a. Members sitting collectively as Full Authority/Resources Committee;
  - b. Chief Executive Officer and Heads of Service (together referred to as 'Senior Management Team');
  - c. Finance Manager (Section 151 Officer) and Authority Solicitor (Monitoring Officer);
  - d. Team Leaders and Managers, including Multi Year Project Managers and Strategic Partnership Lead Officers (collectively referred to as 'Wider Management Team');
  - e. Strategy and Performance Team.
4. The policy is supported by the Risk Management Framework, which outlines in greater detail the steps to be undertaken within the risk management process by responsible Officers, and identifies the monitoring, reporting and evaluation procedures.

## Underlying approach to risk management

5. The following key principles outline the Authority's approach to risk management and internal control:
  - a. The Authority implements robust and integrated risk management arrangements and make sure that they are working effectively.
  - b. The Authority ensures that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated.
  - c. The Authority makes prudent recognition and disclosure of the financial and non-financial implications of risks in line with its risk appetite;
  - d. Risk management is implemented throughout all levels of the Authority, with regular review of its effectiveness including through scrutiny by internal audit.
6. Summary of responsibilities within the risk management process:
  - a. Members sitting collectively as Full Authority/Resources Committee have responsibility for overseeing risk management within the Authority as a whole, taking an open and receptive approach to mitigating risk;
  - b. Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer and Monitoring Officer have statutory responsibilities to ensure compliance with the agreed risk management process including assurance of legal and financial risk management;
  - c. The Senior Management Team is responsible for implementing the risk policy and process as approved by Full Authority;
  - d. Chief Executive Officer, Heads of Service, Finance Manager, Authority Solicitor and Wider Management Team are responsible for ensuring good risk management practice is followed within their management area;
  - e. The Strategy and Performance team is responsible for administering the process to ensure that the risk environment is regularly evaluated, key risks are identified and monitored according to the agreed schedule, and the risk policy reviewed annually.
7. Summary of the Risk Management Framework:
  - a. Establish the context: Define the environment the Authority and our partners are working within to deliver the purposes and duty of National Parks.
  - b. Identify the risks: Based on the defined context, identify the risks to the place of the Peak District National Park, the delivery of the National Park's purposes and duty, and the operations of the National Park Authority, and what risks result from these.
  - c. Assess the risks: For each risk, define how severe it is, how much capacity the Authority has to carry out mitigation actions, and who is responsible for managing it.

- d. Manage risks: Identify any existing actions which are in place to reduce the likelihood or impact of the risks; identify and undertake additional actions to further reduce the likelihood and impact. If no action can be taken, consider how to escalate externally.
- e. Monitor risks: Follow the reporting cycle to regularly monitor risks and the environment for changes.
- f. Update and develop risk practices: Regularly share feedback and best practise to develop and update our risk management.

### Statement of the Authority's risk appetite

- 8. The Authority will use risk management to achieve its objectives through proactively managing its exposure to risk. It will seek to recognise risk and mitigate the adverse consequences but recognises that, in pursuit of its purposes, duty, vision and objectives, it may choose to accept an increased degree of risk in certain circumstances. It will do so, subject always to ensuring that the potential benefits and risks are fully understood before developments are authorised, and that sensible measures to mitigate risk are established.

### Roles within the risk management process

- 9. Full Authority/Resources Committee:
  - a. Approve major decisions affecting the Authority's risk profile or exposure and monitor the ongoing management of all corporate risks and twice yearly (at end Q2 and Q4) to ensure timely action is being taken to mitigate known risks;
  - b. Review new, escalated or significant corporate risks twice yearly (at end Q1 and Q3) to enable responsiveness to change in the risk environment;
  - c. Satisfy themselves that the less significant risks (i.e. service-level and project risks) are being actively managed, with the appropriate controls in place and working effectively;
  - d. Annually review the Authority's approach to risk management and approve changes or improvements to key elements of its processes and procedures as part of the Annual Governance Statement.
- 10. In line with statutory obligation and/or constitutional delegation, Senior Management Team (Chief Executive Officer and Heads of Service), Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer:
  - a. Set the overall culture of risk management in the Authority;
  - b. Take overall responsibility for the administration and implementation of the risk management process within the Authority;
  - c. Identify and evaluate the significant risks faced by the Authority for review by Full Authority (the 'Corporate Risk Register');
  - d. Provide adequate information in a timely manner to Full Authority/Resources Committee on the status of risks and controls;

- e. Annually review the Authority's approach to risk management as part of the annual review of the Code of Corporate Governance and recommend changes or improvements;
- f. Review and monitor the risks identified in their respective services by Wider Management Team (via the 'Service Risk Registers') including consideration of risks from working with strategic and major delivery partnerships, and escalate risks to the Corporate Risk Register as considered appropriate;
- g. Annually review the Authority's uninsured and insured risks, including approving the insurance arrangements in place to mitigate risks inherent in the Authority's portfolio of property and equipment assets, vehicle operations and potential liabilities arising from officer and member action and conduct.

11. Additional statutory roles of the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer:

- a. Help ensure the effective governance of the Authority by supporting the development of risk management and reporting frameworks and ensuring risks are fully considered;
- b. Lead on the implementation and maintenance of a framework of legal and financial controls and procedures for managing legal and financial risks ensuring robust systems of risk management and internal control;
- c. Help promote arrangements to identify and manage key business risks including safeguarding assets, risk mitigation and insurance;
- d. Investigate and prepare statutory reports to Full Authority in the event of any illegality, maladministration or financial impropriety.

12. Heads of Service and Wider Management Team (in activities and projects, and partnerships where the Authority is the accountable body):

- a. Take overall responsibility for the administration and implementation of risk management within the Service, Team, Project or Partnership which they manage;
- b. Identify and evaluate the significant risks faced in the Service, Team, Project or Partnership;
- c. Provide adequate information in a timely manner to Senior Management Team on the status of risks and controls;
- d. Manage significant risks within the policy guidelines;
- e. Propose escalation of service risks to the Corporate Risk Register as considered appropriate in consultation with the relevant Head of Service.

13. Heads of Service and Wider Management team (in partnership activities and projects where the Authority is not the accountable body):

- a. Undertake an initial risk assessment for a new partnership;

- b. Annually review the risks to the Authority of partnership association and involvement, and incorporate any identified risks into the Service Risk Register;
- c. Every six months, review the partnership risks on the Service Risk Register and discuss with the Head of Service any risks that should be escalated to the Corporate Risk Register.

#### 14. Strategy and Performance Team:

- a. Day-to-day responsibility for the administration and implementation of the risk management process;
- b. Support Senior Management Team, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and Wider Management Team to manage and monitor risks;
- c. Facilitate the review and addition of risks onto the Corporate Risk Register every quarter with input from the Senior Management Team;
- d. Report the Corporate Risk Register to the Authority at Q2 and Q4 as part of six-monthly Authority Plan reporting process;
- e. Cascade new, escalated and significant risks to the Authority at Q1 and Q3 within the Movements Report;
- f. Support Wider Management Team with the preparation and review of the Service Risk Registers within the service planning process;
- g. Support the Senior Management Team in the annual review of the Authority's approach to risk management.

#### Identification, monitoring and reporting of risk

#### 15. The Authority will identify and record risks to be monitored and managed using Risk Registers, which are differentiated according to the severity of risks being managed:

- a. The Corporate Risk Register is compiled by the Senior Management Team and approved by Full Authority to record and monitor significant risks, and their management actions, which may have implications or require coordination across the services of the Authority, and possibly in coordination with external organisations;
- b. Service Risk Registers are compiled by the Wider Management Team members within each service, with oversight by the relevant Head of Service, to record and monitor risks, and their management actions, which affect the work of a single service and will be closely link to the Service Plan;
- c. Additional risk registers may be compiled for major partnerships and projects as required by the lead Officer;

#### 16. Risks in the above registers will be monitored and reported on according to the following process:

- a. Quarterly review to the Corporate Risk Register which is reported to Full Authority:

- i. End Q1 & Q3: Movements Report capturing key updates including new, escalated or deescalated risks;
  - ii. End Q2 & Q4: Comprehensive review and update to full Corporate Risk Register.
- b. Half-yearly review of Service Risk Register, with key updates reported as part of the Service Plan review process;
- c. Annual review of the risk environment to feed into full update of both Service and Corporate Risk Registers alongside Authority Plan and Service Plan updates;
- d. As required updates to project and partnership risk registers, integrated into conversations between Wider Management Team members and their Head of Service to assess requirement for escalation to Service Risk Register.

### Monitoring and evaluation of the Risk Policy and processes

- 17. This policy will be monitored and evaluated annually as part of the Authority's annual review of the Code of Corporate Governance, led by the Monitoring Officer and reported to Full Authority with any recommendations for change.
- 18. An internal audit of risk will be undertaken every two to three years to provide reports to Full Authority on the adequacy of the risk policy and process, with recommended updates to be undertaken.
- 19. Additionally, as risk management is part of the Authority's governance arrangements, external audit of risk policy and process will be undertaken when called to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

### Training and support for responsible Officers

- 20. Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that staff who have responsibility for risk management are familiar with the Authority's risk policy and have the appropriate skills and training to undertake their role;
- 21. The Strategy and Performance team will support Members and responsible Officers in identifying, monitoring, reporting and evaluating risks and the risk process, including annually updating guidance documents and delivering training;
- 22. A toolkit of documents that support the management of risk are provided and are included as follows:
  - a. Risk Management Framework;
  - b. Guidance for Risk Managers document;
  - c. Corporate and Service Risk Register templates;
  - d. Risk Scoring Guide (defining likelihood and impact levels).

## **LANDSCAPE AND NATURE RECOVERY AIM OVERVIEW (SLF)**

### **1. Purpose**

To inform Members about the Authority's progress in landscape and nature recovery since March 2025 and what this means for the future.

### **2. Context**

**2.1** The 26 July 2024 Authority meeting agreed the Programmes and Resources themes would continue to align with the National Park Management Plan (NPMP) 2023-28 aims (minute reference 65/22). This paper continues this programme of reporting against the NPMP aims with a focus on Landscape and Nature Recovery.

**2.2** The NPMP vision includes the Peak District National Park (PDNP) being exemplary in its response to nature recovery and that its special qualities and resilience as a living landscape should be significantly enhanced. The activities described in this report contribute to all seven of the [special qualities](#), and in particular Aim Two [Landscape and Nature Recovery](#) - the PDNP is a resilient landscape in which nature, beauty, and cultural heritage are significantly enhanced:

**2.2.1** Objective 4: To be a place where nature recovers and biodiversity flourishes

**2.2.2** Objective 5: To understand, appreciate and enhance the cultural heritage and in particular built environments of the NP as part of an ever-changing landscape

**2.2.3** Objective 6: To protect and enhance the natural beauty of the PDNP's contrasting and ever-evolving landscape

Also Aim One [Climate Change](#), Aim Three [Welcoming Place](#) and Aim Four [Thriving Communities](#) including many of the objectives with their targets and headline delivery of the NPMP. They also contribute to the [Authority Plan](#) Aims One, Two, Three and Four actions.

**2.3** The 25 Year Environment Plan 2018 set out the framework and vision for what the Government wants to do to improve the environment within a generation. The Environmental Improvement Plan was revised and launched in December 2025 [Environmental Improvement Plan 2025](#)

**2.4** Members approved the incorporation of the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) targets into the current NPMP at the Authority AGM in July 2025 (Minute 85/25). Natural England (NE) continue to work on the supporting data and the definitions of the targets and the anticipation now is that they will be co-developed and modified as more data becomes available. Whilst the name of the framework implies the measurement of outcomes the targets are in fact intent/inputs based. Work continues to evolve the framework with a team, including PDNPA strategy and performance team, drawn from across Protected Landscapes (PLs) supporting revision of underlying data by NE. The PDNPMP is due for revision in 2026/27 and methods to track and report partner activity as well as actual change, outcomes, on the ground will be developed during that process. It is anticipated that the NPMP review programme will be presented to members later this year.

**2.5** The Government has recently announced its ambition to continue to support farmers to manage their land in ways that deliver environmental benefits as they produce food. Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) Capital Works Grant and the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) are to re-open this summer with the first SFI

application window aimed at smaller farms and those not in any current ELM scheme. Unfortunately, the relaunched SFI excludes actions which deliver for the uplands e.g. species rich grassland which will now only be available via Higher Tier (HT), opportunities for which remain extremely limited. So, collective feedback with other Protected Landscapes and environmental organisations is being shared with Defra.

- 2.6** The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has continued to be successful both nationally and locally (Please see [National FiPL Report 2025](#)) resulting in continued funding for FiPL officers and a £1.6 Million project fund for PD farmers and land managers in 2026/27 with the same indicative allocation for 2027/28 and 2028/29. There is also an additional allocation for the restoration or creation of Wildlife Rich Habitat (non SSSI land). However, FiPL is increasingly focused on capital projects so effective and attractive ELMs are needed to deliver landscape and nature recovery.
- 2.7** The Land Use Framework has not yet emerged following the Government consultation on a new approach to Land Use in January 2024.
- 2.8** The six Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS's) which cover the PDNP are now virtually complete although vary in style and content.
- 2.9** The Authority responded to a government consultation on the review of the Heather & Grass Burning Regulations, following which new regulations came into force in September 2025. This significantly extends the area over which a license is now required to burn moorland vegetation, reducing the threshold to 30 cm. peat depth and covering all land within Less Favoured Areas (previously 40cm. depth and just within SSSIs), in order to protect carbon stores, biodiversity and water quality.

### **3. Progress since March 2025**

**3.1** Members will be aware from previous reports the Authority is already undertaking many activities, both on our own and in partnership, that assist in delivering our landscape and nature recovery ambitions. The sections below summarise the activities focused on since March 2025 and look to continue and develop.

#### **3.2 Influencing:**

- 3.2.1** The work of the Authority's Officers at national stakeholder meetings representing both the English NPAs and the PDNPA has continued. Increasingly Authority Officers are working with the Protected Landscapes Partnership, National Parks Partnership, National Parks England (NPE) and in particular NPE's Nature Recovery Leaders Group.
- 3.2.2** The Peak District Nature Recovery Plan (PDNRP) will continue to be used to influence the delivery of and complement the six county-based LNRS's. Input into the LNRS's has been prioritised so the PDNRP 'guidance map' and governance arrangements will not be completed until July 2026.
- 3.2.3** Cross Service officers have worked together to clarify the future role of the Authority and implications of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This included responding to a government consultation amending BNG Regulations to maintain conservation benefits whilst reducing the burden on developers and planning authorities. A report is being prepared for Members to consider whether or not the Authority should offer to enter into agreements with landowners wishing to market BNG Sites.
- 3.2.4** FiPL learnings and case studies continue to feed into the design of the ELM schemes. Please see Appendix 1 for details of case studies and infographic summarising what has been delivered.

- 3.2.5** Existing Landscape scale partnerships – Moors for the Future and Morridge Hill Country Landscape Recovery Pilot continue to provide learnings which are shared with other Protected Landscape organisations and partners to influence future national and regional support.
- 3.2.6** The Authority continued to build on the ‘retreat’ with key moorland managers, representatives and stakeholders with a site visit to build a shared understanding of what good looks like and the role of moorland in nature recovery.
- 3.2.7** The Authority’s own land continues to demonstrate environmental land management e.g. the Warslow Moors Estate as part of the Morridge Hill Country ELM Landscape Recovery Pilot Project including Pump Farm as a demonstration farm and nature recovery hub.
- 3.2.8** The 2025 annual report of the Authority’s activities to retain the European Diploma for Protected Areas Award has been submitted. The Authority has held the award since 1966 in recognition of “natural and semi-natural areas and landscapes of exceptional European importance for the preservation of biological, geological and landscape diversity and which are managed in an exemplary way.” Please see [European Diploma - Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats \(coe.int\)](#).

### **3.3 Delivering:**

- 3.3.1** The work of the Authority’s farm advisers with farmers and land managers brokering ELMs and supporting the delivery of FiPL has continued. However, the short window and restricted budget for Capital Grant Scheme (CGS) in Summer 2025 and the sudden withdrawal of SFI March 2025 has had an impact on delivery and successful applications. Despite this farm advisers completed and/or provided advice and support for 8 CGS applications, 2 HT permissive access applications, 9 FiPL applications and 1 England Woodland Creation Offer (10ha). The FiPL team also supported 1 CGS application, approx. 6 SFI applications and 2 HT applications focused on nature recovery & 5 HT permissive access applications. A trainee has been appointed to work with farm advisers and Morridge Hill Country Project. The Cultural Heritage Team provided heritage management advice for 21 HT applications.
- 3.3.2** Landscape scale projects -
  - 3.3.2.1** Moors for the Future – updates have been provided through separate reporting mechanisms.
  - 3.3.2.2** South West Peak Landscape Partnership – delivery has continued through legacy projects e.g. Wader Project. Relationships built during this five-year programme have continued to be developed through Morridge Hill Country.
  - 3.3.2.3** Morridge Hill Country (MHC) Landscape Recovery Pilot Project – the development phase has been extended to August 2026 to complete the application process which is complex with Defra requirements evolving with learnings from Rounds 1 and 2. Interest and support from participating farmers, land owners and managers remain high it is hoped that the pilot will lead to a twenty-year delivery phase with both public and private sector funding. Working with National Parks Partnership the potential to aggregate combined NPA led Landscape Recovery project carbon outputs for potential buyers. Please see Appendix 2 for MHC project update.

- 3.3.2.4 White Peak Landscape Recovery (PD Limestone Farmers) - whilst no Defra funding was secured through Landscape Recovery a farmer Steering Group has explored ways of encouraging farmer participation, green finance opportunities and future governance. Natural England Protected Sites Strategy Pilot has contributed approx. £16,000 and the Authority in-kind match funding. FiPL support to further develop this Farmer Collaborative Group will continue in 2026/27.
- 3.3.2.5 Landscape Connections “Building the Foundations for Corridor Connections” - the National Lottery Heritage Fund has recently awarded the Authority funding for an eighteen-month pre-development phase to develop a further application to develop a landscape scale nature recovery project based on the trails in the White Peak.
- 3.3.3** A range of smaller-scale projects such as the invasive species project, clearing Himalayan Balsam from the Dove catchment have been delivered.
- 3.3.4** The Authority led ELM Test & Trial findings on the role of NPAs as local convener and in local delivery has enabled Authority officers to participate in Defra meetings exploring future farmer networking, collaboration and advice. Defra has allocated £10 million to pilot a new approach in 2026/27 which as details emerge will provide opportunities for PDNPA.
- 3.3.5** FiPL has continued to deliver farmer and land manager projects under the four themes of climate, nature, people and place. Successful delivery of FiPL across all 44 protected landscapes has led to an additional 3 years funding for the programme to March 2029. Please see Appendix 1.
- 3.3.6** The Woodland Trust Partnership extending and growing the arrangements for small-scale woodland creation using Nature for Climate funds. Farm advisers have supported approximately 87 ha of woodland created to date including 6 ha in 2025/26.
- 3.3.7** The Landscape Trees Project, grant funded via the Peak District Foundation, is a new project set up to establish landscape trees across the White Peak and other areas of the NP. Farm advisers are currently dealing with 40 enquiries for funding individual trees (field boundary and in-field trees), guards and tree shelters as well as small areas of tree planting.
- 3.3.8** Authority owned land is also one of the key delivery mechanisms for landscape and nature recovery for example rewetting of a large proportion of moorland.
- 3.3.9** One project to underground overhead electric wires was completed last year, at North Lees Hall/Bronte Cottage. Several further schemes are being developed with electricity supply companies, including Arbor Low, Gradbach/The Roaches, Parsley Hay, Ladybower and in partnership with the National Trust at Longshaw. In Longdendale, the Landscape Enhancement Initiative in partnership with UU and FiPL is funding enhancement and improvements to the Trans-Pennine Trail to help offset the visual impact of the high-voltage electricity lines.
- 3.3.10** Since the last report Members have been briefed on the significant development of the use of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) mapping, related species modelling and natural capital assessment approach developed here in the PD. AI mapping will be further integrated along with the use of the Resist, Accept, Direct framework for a landscape management approach to nature recovery and heritage feature conservation in the revised NPMP.

**3.3.11** The Historic-England funded Archaeological Research Frameworks project has commenced. This is co-ordinating specialist analysis from external consultants to help understand knowledge gaps with a focus on drivers for landscape change and how this affects the historic environment. It is being designed to be used across multiple sectors, especially organisations involved in nature recovery and will engage local communities please see Appendix 3.

**3.4 Regulatory:**

**3.4.1** Regulatory work, notably planning has included dealing with 308 ecological consultations in 2025, including a significant number of applications requiring BNG.

**3.4.2** Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations enquiries, advice and support. Farm advisers have dealt with 7 compliance enquiries/investigations involving potential loss of habitat and 2 formal screening consultations. Best practice guidance is being developed to enable the NPA to seek EIA approval for bale grazing within the NP. The objective is to make land managers aware of the implications of the EIA Regulations, promote best practice, and remove administrative burden for regenerative farmers.

**3.4.3** Land management consultations include 29 Felling Licences, 1 England Woodland Creation Offer, 1 Woodland Management Plan, 30 other informal woodland/hedgerow consultations, 1 Hedgerow Regulation, 1 Section 156 Land disposal, 11 SFI/Countryside Stewardship Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE) review requests, 3 Chatsworth Inheritance Tax Exemption Management Plan consultations.

**3.5 Partners** also continue to deliver for landscape and nature recovery, often with input from Authority officers, for example:

**3.5.1** Sheffield Moors Landscape Partnership.

**3.5.2** Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust managing their Ughill Farm, Bradfield with a nature recovery focus.

**3.5.3** Derwent, Dove and other Catchment Partnerships.

**3.5.4** NE led partnership Ravine Woodland Project continues to mitigate the impacts of Ash Dieback on the internationally designated PD Dales Ash woodlands.

**3.5.5** NE continues to work towards our collective ambitions for nature recovery in the White Peak through initiatives such as Catchment Sensitive Farming and the PD Dales Protected Sites Strategy Pilot. In the Dark and South-West Peak the focus is on the moorland protected sites. NE has started supporting farmers and land managers with applications to the newly released HT scheme but capacity issues mean this will only deliver 12 agreements across the PD in the first phase of work in 2025/26.

**3.5.6** NT continue to develop their High Peak Estate ELM Landscape Recovery project and Vision for their White Peak estate including the recent purchase an ex dairy farm.

**3.5.7** [Wild Peak](#) project led by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

**3.5.8** Derwent Living Forest (kickstarted by Derwent Connections) led by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

**3.5.9** Derbyshire Species Recovery Group, and various species or habitat specific groups, e.g. woodland, water vole, beavers, willow tits.

- 3.5.10** Cheshire Wildlife Trust is delivering small-scale woodland creation with Nature for climate funds in the Cheshire part of the NP including the first agro-forestry scheme in the PD.
- 3.5.11** Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is working with City of Trees to deliver a similar programme of small woodland creation in Derbyshire, in and out of the NP.
- 3.5.12** Peakland Environmental Farmers is a group of about 80 farmers in the Dark and South-West Peak co-ordinated by the Game & Conservation Wildlife Trust who are looking at the opportunities for attracting green finance and/or grants to support the delivery of public goods. FiPL is funding an in-depth analysis of the opportunities for environmental delivery on 9 holdings. This builds on previous FiPL support and a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant.
- 3.5.13** Other farmer groups also support delivery for landscape and nature recovery including the Hope Valley, Bradfield, White Peak, Estates and Hayfield Groups. Most groups have received specific FiPL support for nature/landscape recovery projects and facilitation. Extra-curricular school farming clubs are also now being supported at Lady Manners School and Hope Valley College.
- 3.5.14** The Ecton Partnership continues to delivery for heritage and nature on Ecton Hill, drawing on external funding opportunities as they arise.

#### **4 Recommendations**

- 1. To note progress in delivering to the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2023-28 and Authority Plan landscape and nature recovery aim and targets.**

#### **5. Corporate Implications**

a. Legal

Pursuant to section 65(5) of the Environment Act 1995, the Authority has power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to the accomplishment of its statutory purposes. These projects and activities fall within the Authority's statutory purposes. Pursuant to sections 5 and 11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the Authority must deliver to the statutory purposes and statutory duty, respectively, when carrying out its work. Monitoring the Authority's progress against the aims and objectives set out in the NPMP will enable appropriate scrutiny and safeguard legal compliance.

b. Financial

Activities in the early years of the Authority Plan and NPMP 2023-28 had funding and resources identified to deliver them. However, recent organisational changes particularly the reduction in core funding for nature, landscape, farm advice and engagement and reduction in revenue funding has impacted capacity and delivery in 2025/26. As the revised structure and three-year Defra settlement are fully implemented the "landscape and nature" activities the Authority is engaged will need to be kept under review.

c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan

The activities described in this report contribute to a number of our policies and legal obligations:

- The NPMP and Authority Plan as described in para 2.2. above.
- The 30 by 30 target through which the Government has agreed to conserve (protect) 30% of land by 2030.

- The Landscape Strategy 2023 approved by Authority Members in December 2022 (minute reference 99/22).
- The PDNRP [approved by Members in April 2024](#).

d. Risk Management

The main risk to delivering the landscape and nature recovery aim is resources for the Authority (organisational change, reducing revenue budget), key partners and the wider economy. In addition, the legacy from ELMs pauses means confidence in the future direction of travel remains dented. Whilst there is growing awareness of private/green finance how much this will amount to and how accessible particularly, for upland family farms remains uncertain. The risk that farmers and land managers may continue or return to focusing on food production rather than nature recovery, adaptation and mitigation of climate change remains. Whilst these risks continue to be mitigated by focusing on the priority aims and objectives in the Authority Plan, FiPL and Morridge Hill Country Landscape Recovery project delivery they are not wholly within the control of the Authority.

e. Net Zero

Many of the activities being delivered for landscape and nature recovery also contribute to the Authority's role in climate change. The work with farmers, land managers and owners support the conservation and enhancement of moorland, woodland and trees, species rich grassland using both national and private sector funds. There is growing interest in regenerative farming techniques (herbal leys, rotational grazing, riparian corridors), carbon management and private sector/green finance.

f. Sustainability

Our work on landscape and nature recovery directly improves the sustainability of the NP as a place.

g. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

There are no direct implications for equalities in the activities contained within this report. Indirectly, responding to landscape and nature recovery could have a positive impact on the nine protected characteristics by providing a more resilient environment.

**6. Background papers (not previously published)**

*None.*

**7. Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Farming in Protected Landscapes Case Studies 2025.

Appendix 2 – Morridge Hill Country Landscape Recovery Project Update.

Appendix 3 – Cultural Heritage Projects Summary.

**Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date**

Suzanne Fletcher, Head of Landscape & Engagement

12 March 2026

**Responsible Officer, Job Title**

Phil Mulligan, CEO

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# Farming in Protected Landscapes 2024 - 2025



## CASE STUDIES



Supports **NATURE** recovery



Mitigates the impacts of **CLIMATE** change



Opportunities for **PEOPLE** to enjoy, discover and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage



Protects or improves the quality/character of the **PLACE**



*Log jam slows the flow of Blake Brook. The willow provides habitat initially and will reproduce and spread.*

## Blake Brook Project



Restoring landscapes, Strengthening partnerships

The Blake Brook winds through several landholdings in the upper Dove catchment, an area rich in natural beauty but historically challenged by access issues, habitat degradation, and complex landowner relationships.

**Grant value:**

**£34,160**

This project brought long-standing concerns to resolution; improving footpath access, enhancing the condition of the SSSI (part of the Leek Moors), and fostering collaboration between neighbouring landowners. With support from the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme and a design-stage agreement with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, the project enabled effective cooperation between landowners, Natural England, and teams from the National Park Authority.

Key outcomes on individual holdings included:

- First-time engagement of several landowners with national agri-environment schemes.
- Specific environmental challenges addressed through capital works such as pond restoration and riparian fencing.

Major works led by SWT included:

- Footpath improvements resolving a long-standing access issue while benefiting adjacent wet heath and fen habitats previously impacted by erosion, trampling, and drainage.
- Restoration along Blake Brook, where simple but effective interventions such as targeted bank re-profiling, engineered log jams and willow planting, were used to kickstart natural processes.



*Bank re-profiling at Blake Brook*

These actions are now encouraging the development of complex habitats, including new flow pathways, split channels, floodplain scour, sediment bars, and patchy scrub growth.

The Blake Brook project is a strong example of how collaborative, landscape-scale action can deliver real environmental and access benefits while building stronger relationships across the farming and conservation community.



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

Please get in touch if you have a project idea, or would like to find out more:

[farming@peakdistrict.gov.uk](mailto:farming@peakdistrict.gov.uk)

**01629 816270**



## Improving accessibility and inclusivity



FiPL has recently launched several projects aimed at improving access to the countryside for everyone.

Managed by the British Mountaineering Club (BMC), Horseshoe Quarry serves both climbers and conservation efforts. The BMC has enhanced the quarry's entrance and approach to accommodate wheelchair users, and developed a safe, level platform at the base of the crag, enabling paraclimbers to access a range of climbing routes more easily.



Improving countryside access has taken shape through FiPL-supported initiatives. These include the installation of boardwalks to navigate waterlogged routes in Macclesfield Forest, the replacement of unstable ladder stiles with wider pedestrian gates along the well-used Bradfield Ancient Ways, and the creation of permissive paths. Interpretation panels have been installed at points along these paths, featuring a map of the permissive route and information about its natural and heritage significance.



FiPL continues to support educational visits to farms, with fourteen Peak District farms opening their doors to the public during 2024-25, helping to foster greater understanding of farming and the countryside. Visitors included disadvantaged children and adults, and those with Special Educational Needs.

Projects utilising volunteers are helping people get directly involved in improving the countryside for nature while learning about its management. To date, over a thousand volunteers have been engaged on FiPL projects in the Peak District.

## New House Farm



### Environmental resilience in upland farming

**Grant value:  
£27,016**

**Mother-daughter partnership Sue Jackson and Erica Leigh combine traditional stewardship with innovative conservation projects at New House Farm, near Chinley.**

With FiPL funding and the engagement of volunteers, they have planted almost 700 metres of hedge providing shelter for livestock and linking two wooded cloughs that have also been enhanced through a woodland grant.

Sue and Erica have opened a pop-up campsite beside the Pennine Bridleway in the farm's upland reaches. FiPL funding of fingerposts and waymarkers enabled a permissive path from the Pennine Bridleway to an existing footpath. South of the farmstead, another permissive trail leads through a wooded valley carpeted with bluebells in spring.



*Newly planted hedge links tree planting in the upland clough to the woodland below*

To enhance livestock grazing options, and protect water quality, a new supply from the farmhouse to remote water troughs, and a new section of fence means that there is now 2km of woodland and stream protected from stock damage.

Erica has hosted farm visits for a local scout group, giving children hands-on experience with farming and an understanding of the environment. Through these projects, New House Farm not only strengthens its environmental resilience but also fosters community connection to the land.



Please get in touch if you have a project idea, or would like to find out more:

[farming@peakdistrict.gov.uk](mailto:farming@peakdistrict.gov.uk)

**01629 816270**

# Lower Barn Farm Meadows and Moors



A vision for nature recovery in the South West Peak

Tenant farmer Norman Belfield's pioneering conservation work at Lower Barn Farm in Wildboardclough has gained national attention, having been featured on Countryfile.

**Grant value:**  
**£43,542**

Nestled beneath Shutlingsloe hill, 'Cheshire's Matterhorn', Lower Barn Farm is a shining example of how a whole-farm approach and careful livestock management help to restore a mosaic of semi-natural habitats across meadows and moorland. While his business centres on breeding high-quality Aberdeen Angus cattle, Norman's commitment to nature recovery includes the creation of wood pasture on the lower in-bye fields. This forms a gentle transition between the wooded valley bottom and the surrounding acid grassland.



Spreading seed-rich green hay on scarified pasture which will be rolled to aid germination

Norman is transforming grassland into vibrant hay meadows by spreading green hay rich in wildflower seeds, sourced from exceptional meadows in nearby Wincle. He is also managing the banks to support rare species like mountain pansy and grass of Parnassus.

On the upland moors, FiPL funding has enabled the installation of peat dams to rewet the moorland. This encourages the growth of sphagnum moss and other blanket bog species, creating ideal feeding grounds for breeding and overwintering waders, as well as habitats for amphibians and invertebrates.

In partnership with Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Norman has also created wader scrapes; providing vital summer feeding areas for species such as curlew. Norman's work exemplifies how farming and nature recovery can go hand in hand, offering a model for sustainable land management in protected landscapes.

**Farming in Protected Landscapes 2021-2025**

**827** farmers taking part

**72** paths created or improved

**53** rivers and streams protected and enhanced

**£5.8** million invested in Climate Nature People Place

**564** hectares improved agricultural soil health

**22,000** trees planted

**38** cultural heritage features restored

**4221** hectares land managed for nature

**31,000** metres hedgerows planted or restored

**77** ponds created

**1251** volunteers engaged

**281** educational farm visits

**457** projects funded

**10** farmer cluster groups created and supported

**What are our farmers views?**

"FiPL has enabled us to carry out work that wouldn't have been possible otherwise and has allowed us to welcome more visitors to enjoy the beautiful environment. It's been a pleasure to share our farming knowledge with the young visitors"

Erica Leigh,  
New House Farm

"FiPL has helped me to farm traditionally, and to create habitats for curlew and other species. We've all got to do our bit for the wellbeing of nature, the animals and of us too."

Norman Belfield,  
Lower Barn Farm



Thoughts of the Peak District FiPL team

"We're proud to be part of a programme that empowers farmers to embrace nature-friendly practices while safeguarding the unique character of the Peak District landscape."

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Please get in touch if you have a project idea, or would like to find out more:  
**farming@peakdistrict.gov.uk** **01629 816270**

# Appendix 2: Morridge Hill Country Landscape Recovery Project – Progress Update

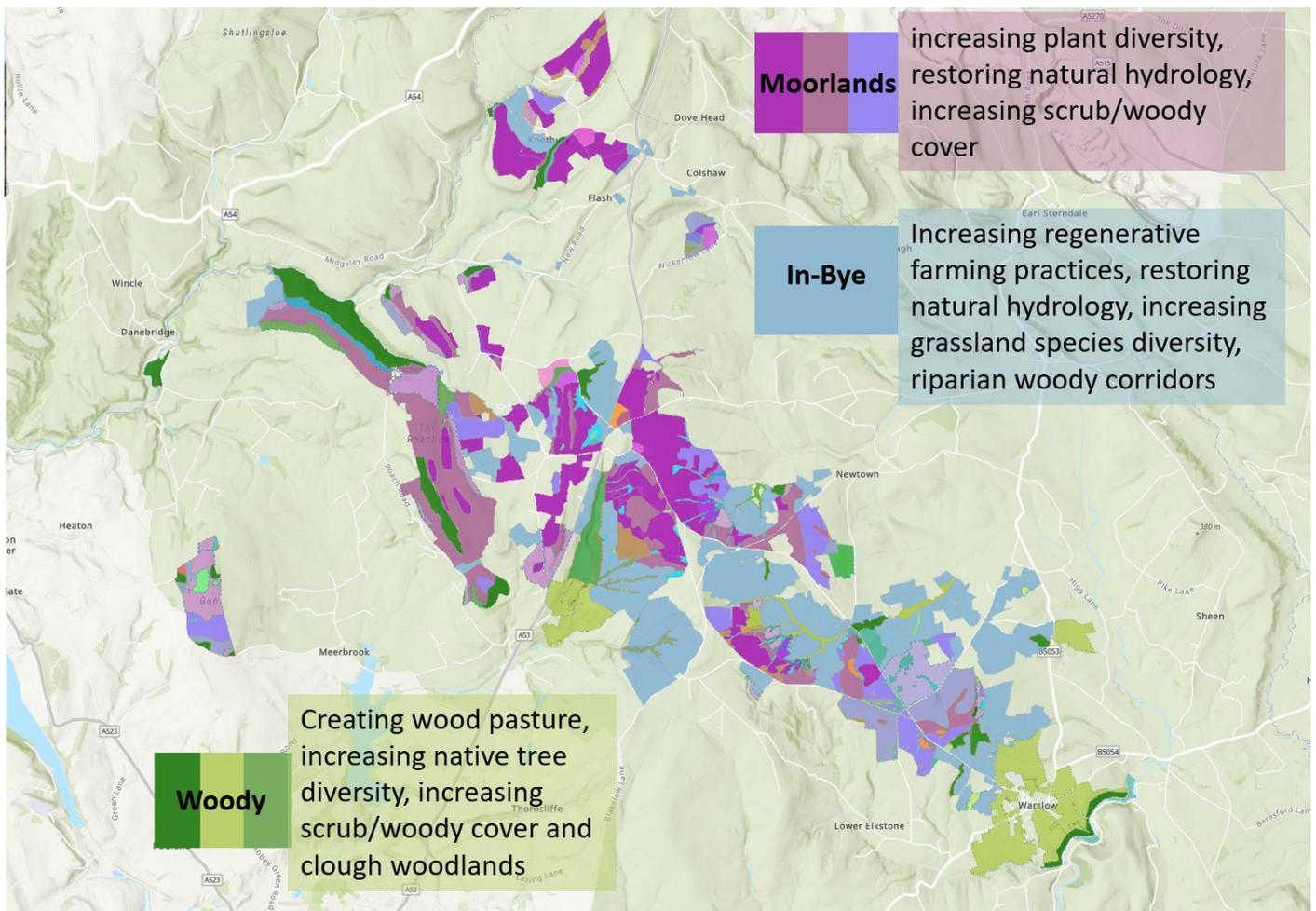


## Landscape Recovery Pilot-Phase

Three projects have entered into implementation from Summer 2025 the latest being [Evenlode](#). DEFRA expect to announce another “bundle” of projects entering implementation over the coming months.

## Morridge Hill Country Ambitions

The “gold-standard” land management plan below outlines the ambitions for the project area and will continue to be refined with farmers and land managers in our latest round of meetings to forecast the potential financial income for different land management options.



## Farmer and Land Manager Engagement

Over half of our 25 farmers and land managers have fed back on potential delivery model and payment mechanisms. There is a good appetite for a proposed tiered payment system, and a model which allows them to become an integral part of the project for example becoming members or shareholders depending on the delivery vehicle chosen. Land management options meetings start on 25<sup>th</sup> March to allow a farmer/land manager approved version of the land management plan to be submitted in May.



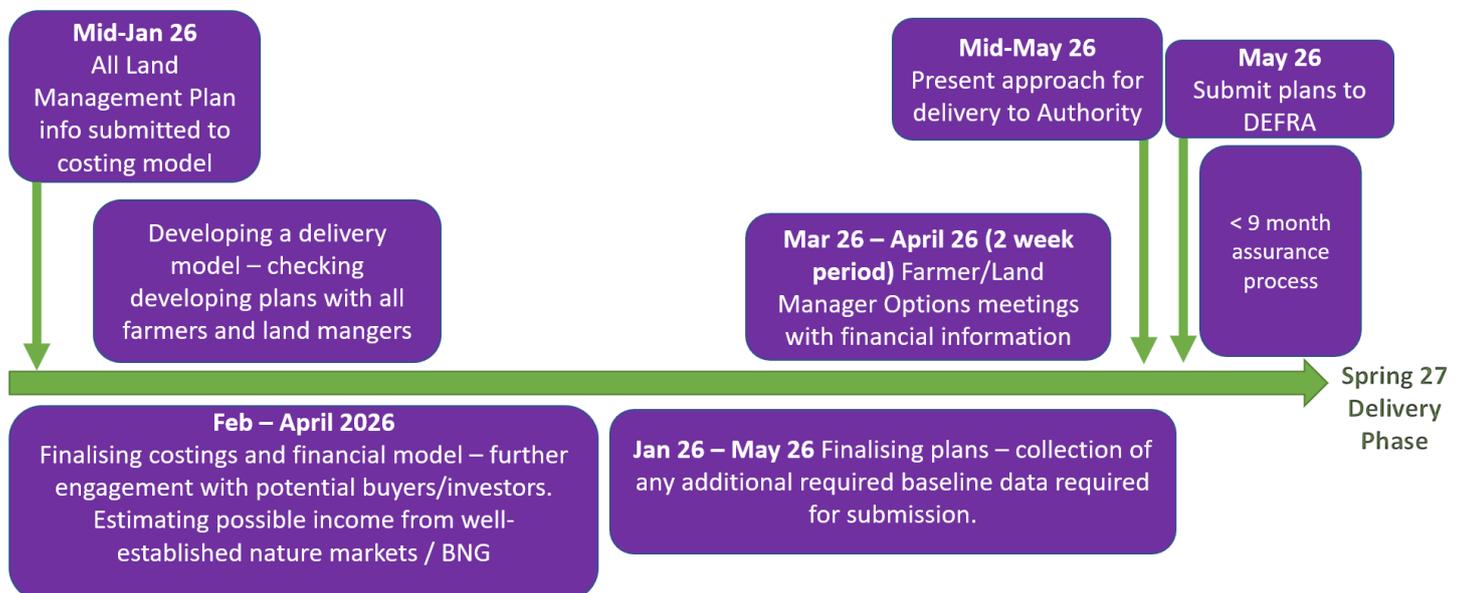
# Morridge Hill Country Landscape Recovery Project – Progress Update

## Project Timeline

The project has had a 4-month extension, and is due to submit plans to DEFRA at the end of May. Due to large numbers of projects going into the next-phase (assurance) there will likely be a scheduling period which could add on 2-3 months to the gap between development and implementation for a successful project.

DEFRA will fund core project staff during the scheduling period (to be agreed prior to it) and the additional 3-month assurance period as projects were asked to budget for only 3 initially.

Negotiation phase follows assurance and if/when a deal is reached the project can progress into implementation



## Attracting Blended Finance

Each LR project is targeted to attract some funding from private sources, although a specific proportion has not been specified. Calculations for current well-established nature markets (Woodland Carbon Code and Peatland Code) give limited potential income through low numbers of units generated. BNG units can be generated and potential demand is being assessed.

Engagement has taken place with organisations operating in and around the project area and it is very likely that we will have letters of intent from some of these organisations, including one of the key beneficiaries of the proposed activity, the water companies.

The project is working closely with National Parks Partnership, and the 4 other LR projects led by National Parks to explore opportunities to aggregate some of our outcomes and access funding for those at a national level.



## Appendix 3: Cultural Heritage Projects Summary

### **An Archaeological Research Framework for the Peak District – ‘living with landscape change’**

This Historic England-funded project started in July 2026, and will last for two years. It will create an Archaeological Framework for the Peak District. The project recognises our special landscape qualities, and the drivers of potential landscape change that will affect the historic environment now and in the future. The research framework will be useful for researchers, land managers and advisers and local communities alike. It will summarise what we know about the historic environment, and identify new research questions to help us prioritise our effort and resources in the future.

The finished Research Framework will be hosted on the publicly-accessible website, hosted by Historic England.

#### **Aims**

- to produce an archaeological research framework that will support the PDNPA, heritage organisations and communities to better understand, engage with and protect the historic environment of the National Park across development management, environmental land management, nature recovery and other climate action, volunteering and community research
- to develop an innovative ‘living with landscape change’ approach that recognizes the unique current and future challenges of Peak District landscapes
- to foster and grow supportive, diverse, inclusive and collaborative networks of people and organisations to better research, champion and celebrate our heritage
- to grow historic environment research interest in the Peak District and establish it as a primary destination for high quality historic environment research
- to help our local communities engage with, and contribute to, the research framework
- to make the framework relevant to those outside the heritage sector (e.g. Wildlife Trusts)

#### **Delivery**

The framework is broken down into **18 time periods or themes**. Through the autumn and winter 2025/26 we have been interrogating our historic environment datasets and synthesizing the data to produce information packs for our external specialist authors who are creating drafts texts for each period and theme. We are starting to receive drafts text now. This work will continue through 2026/27.

We will be trialing a new spatial element to our framework so that we can identify **research questions and opportunities by landscape character type** – we hope this will be particularly useful for those working in other sectors (e.g. natural environment, nature recovery etc). This will promote the important contribution that the historic environment can make to nature recovery and climate change adaptation.

Natalie Ward gave a presentation at Derbyshire Archaeology Day (audience c.460) to promote the project and gain community group interest and involvement. We have started a list of local heritage groups, **35 local groups so far**, most of which we have never engaged with before. We hope to forge a strong network with these groups to support future research and activities.



Presenting the project at Derbyshire Archaeology Day

Introduction to Research Frameworks    How to use the Research Framework site    Guides for RF Managers    Register/Sign in

# The Research Frameworks Network

Here you can access directly the different research frameworks or cross search across the frameworks for research questions and strategies associated with different places, periods or themes. NB Page under construction!

EXPLORE FRAMEWORKS    EXPLORE BY MAP

## All Regions

# People of the Peak: Past, Present and Future



Page 80

World walking at  
Manninglow by  
volunteers, before  
the spreading  
of green hay  
for meadow  
restoration

CATHERINE PARKER HEATH describes a new chapter for cultural heritage volunteering in the Peak District National Park

The past year has marked the beginning of an exciting new chapter for cultural heritage volunteering in the Peak District National Park. In March 2025, we were delighted to learn that we had secured initial funding of £204,376 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for the development phase of our project *People of the Peak: Past, Present, Future*, jointly with the Peak District National Park Foundation. This project has our volunteers, along with our historic sites, at its heart – even the project name was chosen by one of our dedicated volunteers.

The project aims to enhance the monitoring and conservation of historic monuments and buildings, grow our volunteer community, and create more inclusive opportunities for people to get involved – whether through regular volunteering, one-off activities, or other forms of engagement.

In the initial phase, a small team has been recruited to lead the project and test a range of different approaches to increase volunteer and community involvement in protecting the Peak District’s unique cultural heritage. Based on what they learn, they will also progress plans to apply for a full National Lottery grant of around £775,000 at a later date.

Roisin Joyce, director of the Peak District National Park Foundation said: “We’re thrilled to be awarded this funding, made possible by National Lottery players, to



Volunteers carrying out repairs to the bank leading from Arbor Low, funded by a Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) grant

allow development of the first stage of the *People of the Peak* project.

“The task of caring for heritage sites across a landscape of this scale is vast and existing monitoring and conservation is not enough. This project will create an inclusive volunteering programme so more people can get directly involved in monitoring and conserving our national heritage.

Anna Badcock, the National Park Authority’s cultural heritage team manager, said: “The Authority has faced significant funding cuts over the last 10 years, across all services. A well-trained volunteer cohort is vital to help the Authority monitor and care for the heritage of the National Park, through its own work and in partnership with others.

“If we don’t have a clear picture of the state of heritage in the National Park, risks go unidentified and opportunities for early intervention are missed.



“The natural and cultural aspects of all our landscapes are tightly interlinked. This project will also help us develop our approach to landscape conservation, which may need to adapt in the face of a changing climate.”

This work is much needed. The National Park covers 555 square miles and is home to 473 Scheduled Monuments, 2,848 Listed Buildings, and numerous other heritage features. Monitoring and protecting this vast cultural landscape is a significant challenge, and volunteers play a crucial role in helping us meet it.

The development phase, which began in July 2025 and runs until November 2026, is focused on consultation, collaboration, and testing new ideas. Our goal is to ensure that the delivery phase of the project is meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable. Key activities include:

- Working with landowners to better understand and protect heritage features on their land. We’re also developing a £200,000 Community Heritage Grant Fund to support conservation efforts.

- Gathering insights from residents and visitors about their awareness of cultural heritage – what they know, what they’d like to learn, and how they’d prefer to engage.

- Consulting with volunteers, both current and potential, to understand their experiences, their expectations, and identify opportunities for training and support.

- Piloting new approaches to conservation and condition monitoring, including enhanced training and using digital tools.

- Exploring collaboration across teams and with external partners, with a focus on engaging young people (aged 18–30) and individuals from ethnically diverse communities.

- Investigating the relationship between cultural heritage and biodiversity, particularly how protecting cultural heritage can support natural habitats in the face of a changing climate.

All of this work is helping us shape a delivery phase that will be inclusive, sustainable, and impactful. We want to ensure that our heritage is protected for future generations, that volunteers now feel valued and supported, and that communities across the region have meaningful opportunities to engage with the history of the Peak District.

We hope that the *People of the Peak* will be a collective effort to celebrate and safeguard the monuments, structures, landscapes and their stories – all that defines this unique place.

As we move forward, we look forward to welcoming new voices, building new partnerships, and continuing to explore the deep connections between the people of the past, present and future.

The Heritage Open Day in 2025 at the newly-restored limekiln at Butterton. Picture: Richard Knisely-Marpole

Left: Alport Moor pye kiln under reconstruction. Picture: Richard Knisely-Marpole



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Formerly unrestricted car parking in the Winnats Pass, Castleton

# Unlocking the Peak's past

ANNA BADCOCK and FIONA STUBBS reveal the discovery of an extraordinary pictorial archive

Working on basement shelves and cramped attic spaces of the National Park head office, a unique and extraordinary archive has been quietly waiting to be rediscovered. After Covid interrupted our plans, finally the Peak District National Park Foundation, the Derbyshire Record Office (DRO) and the Peak District National Park Authority have been able to secure a grant of £45,000 from the Archives Revealed fund. Thanks to this funding, our historic archive – made up of over 44,000 images – is to be catalogued and made available to the public.

This unique collection documents the people, places and landscapes of the Peak District, revealing a fascinating history throughout the 20th century to the present day. It is particularly timely as 2026 marks the 75th anniversary of the Peak District's designation as the UK's first national park.

The images offer insights into all aspects of life in the National Park. As well as classic views and stunning scenery, the collection documents special events and the cultural



heritage, rural customs, craft skills and traditions of local communities. It also sheds light on everyday life, showing that many of the issues that challenge our landscapes today, such as litter, car parking and people pressure, have been ongoing for many decades.

This incredibly rich and varied collection will help us



The former mobile information centre, which attended many local events such as well dressings



to explore and share the stories of our cultural landscapes. Importantly, the collection also documents changes to people and nature in our national park, and has huge potential to help us better understand and communicate landscape change, a vital research area in the face of climate change.

The collection will allow us to engage with residents, visitors, volunteers, academics, children and young people in new ways, both within and well beyond the boundaries of the National Park. The project will create volunteer opportunities, develop a learning resource for schools and a display for National Park visitor centres in the summer of 2026.

'Archives Revealed' is a funding partnership of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Pilgrim Trust, the Wolfson Foundation and The National Archives. When the image archive has been catalogued, a curated online collection of around 3,000 images will be available to the



Far right: Petalling underway at a Bakewell well dressing in 1963; right: The former Prisoner of War camp at Biggin; below: Inside the former Stilton cheese making factory at Hartington



public on the DRO's online image library, Picture the Past. The whole of the collection will be available for research, secured in archival conditions at the Derbyshire Record Office for long-term curation.

Right: An archive picture of rope making

**WELCOMING PLACE AIM OVERVIEW (SLF)****1. Purpose**

To inform Members about the Authority's progress in the Welcoming Place aim since March 2025 and what this means for the future.

**2. Context**

**2.1** The 26 July 2024 Authority meeting agreed the Programmes and Resources themes would continue to align with the National Park Management Plan (NPMP) 2023-28 aims (minute reference 65/22). This paper continues this programme of reporting against the NPMP aims with a focus on Landscape and Nature Recovery.

**2.2** The NPMP vision includes the Peak District National Park (PDNP) being a welcoming place where all are inspired to care and communities thrive. The activities described in this report contribute to the [special qualities](#), and in particular deliver for Aim Three [Welcoming Place](#): the PD is a welcoming place where all are inspired to enjoy, care for and connect to its special qualities:

**2.2.1** Objective 7: To encourage a sustainable visitor economy that supports local businesses, cares for the NP's special qualities and respects the well-being of local communities.

**2.2.2** Objective 8: To create opportunities for young people and those from under-served communities to connect with and enjoy the NP.

**2.2.3** Objective 9: To promote the NP as a place where there are opportunities for the improvement of physical and mental health and wellbeing.

As well as contributing to Aim One [Climate Change](#), Aim Two [Landscape and Nature Recovery](#), and Aim Four [Thriving Communities](#) including many of the objectives with their targets and headline delivery of the NPMP. They also contribute to the [Authority Plan](#) Aims One, Two, Three and Four actions.

**2.3** The 25 Year Environment Plan 2018 set out the framework and vision for what the Government wants to do to improve the environment within a generation. The Environmental Improvement Plan was revised and launched in December 2025 [Environmental Improvement Plan 2025](#)

**2.4** The [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) (PLTOF) was launched in January 2024. It seeks to support Protected Landscapes (PLs) in meeting their huge potential for nature, climate, people and place and to deliver the EIP25 goals. Area 9 is to improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with PLs. However, the access targets remain under review. Members approved the incorporation of the targets into the current NPMP at the Authority AGM in July 2025 (Minute 85/25). It is anticipated that the NPMP review programme will be presented to members later this year.

**2.5** Further organisational change during 2025/26 has again included a reduction in core funded engagement capacity which will impact on the ability to develop and manage externally-funded engagement projects. Of the four priority engagement projects identified and for which sources of external funding were being explored from March 2025 the following provides an update:

- 2.5.1** Moorland Discovery Centre (MDC) on the Longshaw Estate - The National Trust (NT) took over full delivery costs of the MDC from July 2025. NT continues to explore options to maintain delivery at the MDC.
- 2.5.2** Landscape Discovery Centre (LDC) at Longdendale – external funding including from the Peak District Foundation (PDF) has been explored and proposals for the next three years of funding will be presented to Members through a separate report to this same meeting.
- 2.5.3** Ambassador Schools project – external funding has not yet been secured for 2026/27 but elements of the Ambassador Schools project will form part of the LDC project and there will be Ranger support for some schools.
- 2.5.4** Community Engagement project – external funding has not been secured for 2026/27.
- 2.6** The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has continued to be successful both nationally and locally resulting in continued funding for FiPL officers and a £1.6 Million project fund for PD farmers and land managers in 2026/27 with the same indicative allocation for 2027/28 and 2028/29. The FiPL people theme provides funding for access enhancements and educational access.
- 2.7** The Diverse Audience Plan (DAP) has not been reviewed. To simplify the number of plans, and mitigate our reduced capacity, going forward the DAP will be reviewed and incorporated with the Authority's Equality Plan.
- 2.8** Whilst the economic benefits to the NP from tourism are acknowledged the need for better and more shared data across partners has also been recognized. Work continues to use data to better understand the changes in terms of user numbers and patterns and the impact that this may be having on the area's communities, its fragile natural environment and cultural heritage assets. This has started to be explored with Members with next steps identified along with a partnership-based Tourism Charter. A key focus of the Charter will be to re-energise work on Area Management Plans. The first of this kind has been launched in the Castleton and Mam Tor area bringing together a set of actions from partners and formulating a more joined up spatial approach.
- 2.9** The Authority seeks, as its limited resources allow, to enhance access on priority routes e.g. those promoted, connected to visitor hubs and for access for all.' Increasing severe weather events and visitor usage is undoubtedly affecting the condition of rights of way, and impacting on their maintenance'.
- 2.10** Since the March 2025 the Authority has undertaken activities, both on our own and in partnership, that assist in meeting our welcoming place ambitions. The summary below updates Members on the activities we have focused our resources on since March 2025.
- 3. Progress since March 2025**
- 3.1** As reported to this Committee in March 2025 the Authority undertakes activities, both on our own and in partnership, that assist in delivering our welcoming place ambitions. However, following the organisational changes in 2025 and 2026 capacity for these activities including seeking external funding for future engagement projects is much reduced.

- 3.2 Priority routes within the NP** - 291 routes/sections continue to be checked and maintained by Rangers and volunteers e.g. Miles without Stiles, Walks Around, FIPL concession routes, nationally and regionally promoted routes etc.
- 3.3 Data-informed Rangering** – Rangers have been working colleagues to develop app-based recording of ‘behaviour impact’ on the landscape e.g. litter, fly camping, illegal parking etc. Since, August 2025 9 Area Rangers have recorded 555 incidences/data points, which can be interrogated on the Authority mapping system. Future plans for 2026/27 involve rolling this out on Volunteer Ranger Patrols and using the data to analyse patterns and measure success of engagement tactics.
- 3.4 Defra Access for All** - Year 4 capital funding of £255k was received in October 2025 and January 2026 for removing barriers to access. Please see Appendix 1 for a summary of funded projects. A Changing Place at Trentabank Ranger Centre has been provided to complement the Changing Places at Millers Dale and Parsley Hay provided in previous years. Defra has given an indicative 2026/27 allocation of £255k. Separate reports on the 2025-26 delivery and the 2026/27 funding will be brought to Resources Committee in April.
- 3.5 Active Travel England** – the [Peak District Walking, Wheeling, Cycling, and Horse-riding Infrastructure Plan](#) has been published and work is on-going with Active Travel England and local partners on detailed feasibility and scheme development to improve access to the strategic network. Phase 2 funding is likely but not yet confirmed.
- 3.6 FiPL** has continued to fund the creation and subsequent management of new permissive paths and bridleways in the NP and is working with Natural England (NE) where appropriate to transfer their management to Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship. It has also funded the upgrade of numerous existing rights of way by replacing stiles with gates along a route and surface improvements e.g. resurfacing of approx. 1km of the Longdendale Trail and part of the Derwent Valley Heritage Trail.
- 3.7 Area Management pilot** – in November 2025 the PDNPA produced a draft Area Management Plan for Castleton and Mam Tor and shared with partners. This work links closely to the Tourism Charter also created this year.
- 3.8 Biennial Ease of Use survey** - a randomised 5% survey of the NP’s rights of way network has provided a pass rate of 85.64%. Signposting, waymarking, condition of the path, structures, and obstructions were surveyed by Rangers and Ranger volunteers using a field-based app. The Access Point monitoring app continues to be used by rangers to record the state of all access points to and on access land and its easy usage is helping to increase monitoring overall.
- 3.9 Fire Operations** – after a busy 2025 fire season, the Fire Operations Group (FOG) put on another successful 3-day FOG wildfire training course in Buxton, and were awarded a FIPL grant of £45,000 for wildfire Personal Protective Equipment and LANTRA-accredited wildfire training.
- 3.10 Environmental Quality Mark (EQM) Community Interest Company (CIC)** - the Authority has continued to support the EQM CIC which continues to deliver the PD EQM for the Authority. A further 7 PD businesses have likely to achieve the award this March (5 within the NP).
- 3.11 Volunteering** - The first full year of volunteering activity has been successfully delivered using all opportunities now accessible to the full pool of volunteers via a single page on BetterImpact. This includes the moving of the complete historic records of individual volunteer hours and joining dates. In addition:

**3.11.1** Welcome Volunteer programme for National Park Centres (NPCs) - alongside a pilot of Mobile Information Events (MIE) in key locations, was developed and delivered in summer 2025, with expansion planned into 2026. Further initiatives were developed over winter 2025, including the new PPCV Peak Pathways programme, youth engagement project targeting 18–26-year-olds, and the creation of entry-level volunteering opportunities within the Ranger team.

**3.11.2** Access for All projects have benefited from the use of volunteers in designing and delivering. This includes Ranger volunteers and a scheme by PPCV to enhance accessibility at Brunts Barn. A proportion of this will be captured by the volunteer statistics above. The Defra access funding has also provided for equipment to support the activities of volunteers. This includes all-terrain wheelchairs, an e-cargo bike and e-bikes for use on the trails, and a mobile ramp and pop-up loo.

**3.11.3** The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) - funded the People of the Peaks project in partnership with the PDF has entered its development phase looking at cultural heritage volunteering opportunities that can be implemented in any delivery programme. The project has a specific goal to diversify the heritage volunteer cohort and expand the volunteering opportunities. This project is working with Peak District Mosaic and the Youth Impact Collective. In addition, a successful programme with Moors for the Future Partnership (MFFP) was delivered, including sphagnum moss planting, dip well surveying, and use of the Bogtastic van.

**3.11.4** Mileage/ travel expense claims for all volunteers across the Authority were introduced for the first time.

**3.11.5** Volunteer statistics from April 2025 to January 2026 - total volunteers recorded on BetterImpact 1,804 (14% higher than 2024/25). Total hrs 66,951 across all projects (8.5% higher than 2024/25). 28 welcome volunteer train for June or 571 hours/95 days to date.

**3.11.6** FiPL encourages and supports the use of volunteers in delivering projects. Whilst some of this volunteering is captured in the statistics above e.g. where PPCV have been involved, volunteers associated with other organisations e.g. Steel Valley Project, Wildlife Trusts, smaller less formal community groups and individuals are additional.

**3.12 Access Unlimited Coalition** – An expression of interest has been developed for the next steps towards a £10 million NHLF Grant led by Access Unlimited to expand the project across the UK. Project Tomorrow Stewards would be the third iteration of Generation Green. Progress has been paused as the Youth Hostel Association has withdrawn as lead partner. The coalition is considering next steps.

**3.13 Ambassador Schools** - a unique project delivered by the Authority launched in 2022 and currently includes 24 schools (Primary and secondary), both within the NP and within 30 minutes travel time of the boundary. The project aims to support schools and communities to build lasting relationships with the NP, and promote the benefits of outdoor learning and connection to nature. Funding secured through the PDF has enabled delivery of focused activity this year, including delivering in-school assemblies and workshops; circulating termly newsletters with information and support for outdoor learning; building and supporting a network of like-minded schools; and maintaining an informative website with relevant and useful teaching resources for teachers to use within school. Please See [PD Ambassador Schools: PDNP](#).

- 3.14 Landscape Discovery Centre** at Longdendale - the school visit programme was fully booked, stretching to reach increased income targets in the new externally funded project model and engaging over 4,000 young people, largely from urban communities and target audiences to the north and west of the NP. Comments from teachers have been very appreciative of the ongoing provision of the service: "*We're so glad the visits can continue. We love visiting the centre and working with the brilliant staff*". Officers have also been able to bring education expertise to other projects, including FiPL and Championing National Parks for Everyone, as well as delivering at Sheffield Outdoor Learning Conference. Proposals for the next four years are to be presented to Members through a separate report to this same meeting.
- 3.15 Moorland Discovery Centre** school visit programme - continued delivery of A level Carbon and Water programme excels in promoting an in-depth understanding of the NP's special qualities. It provides opportunities for 16–18-year-olds to connect with the moorland landscape with many of the students carrying out A level projects based on moorland carbon and water data. Pupils were made aware of the impact of tourism. Detailed information on all different species of NP flora and fauna is provided. Examples of feedback include *'It was the first time most of the group had been to the Peaks, so it was brilliant to have them in the landscape experiencing the landscape for the first time'*.
- 3.16 FiPL** has supported 14 farms to deliver educational visits across the NP and immediate surroundings for schools, community groups. Significantly visits are tailored for those with special educational needs. Two farms focus on the latter with weekly activities for the young people providing them with an element of work training in addition to education. For the first time FiPL has funded residential stays for 176 school children from deprived areas of Sheffield at Thornbridge Outdoors including a farm visit, nature session, dark skies event and outdoor activities.
- 3.17 Junior Rangers** - has continued in the Goyt valley under leadership of the Rangers, but otherwise ended with reduction of engagement capacity.
- 3.18 Youth Impact Collective** - has assigned core roles including Chair, Co-Chair, Project Leads for Nature and Welcoming Place. Core role members are now organising meeting programmes and agendas. Recent events have included collaborating with MFFP on fire awareness campaigns and inputting into the UK Community Fund Expression of Interest, aiming to expand and embed youth voice across National Parks UK wide. Animo Leadership is running coaching and leadership development sessions for group members, funded by American Express. Please see Appendix 2.
- 3.19 Championing National Parks for Everyone** – lead by Peak District Mosaic the main activity ends March 2026 with a final project end date of December 2026. 32 'Community Champions' from culturally and ethnically diverse communities have received training, developing skills, confidence and awareness of the benefits of NPs. All Champions have led their own event, providing inspiring opportunities for 370 participants from their own communities to experience and enjoy the NP, most for the first time. 13 events for local community organisations, enabling 320 people from diverse and under-represented communities to enjoy the beauty, and health and wellbeing benefits, of the NP have been delivered. A key project outcome is addressing low representation of people from diverse backgrounds in the environmental sector, and ongoing training and signposting to career and volunteering opportunities, for those involved in the project are being provided. There will also be an Evaluation by the University of Derby.
- 3.20 National Parks UK and the Protected Landscapes Partnership** – there has been

joint working on creating a shared vision for belonging in our National Parks. Community group support examples include: Dal Kular Black Writer in residence, please see [Peak District Residencing – Black Nature in Residence](#);

**3.21 Community Projects: Peak District Nature Prescriptions** - in collaboration with the RSPB this was relaunched in May 2025. PDF funding provided 500 extra copies enabling 19 new Healthcare/Support Professionals (14 organisations) and 4 PDNPA volunteers to be trained in delivery (Derbyshire, South Yorkshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire, including 7 Blythe House Hospice staff (1st Hospice in England to use Nature Prescriptions)). Reduced Authority core funding for community projects means that the project contact is now the RSPB. Two monthly **Dementia Friendly Health Walks** are now volunteer led, in collaboration with MHA Communities Peaks and Dales and Still Waters, Buxton. A celebration event was held in February for Volunteers, Participants, Staff and Group Leaders. The walks will continue under Ranger oversight.

**3.22 Landscapes Unlocked** project in partnership with the PDF secured external funding to secure and catalogue the PDNPA's unique image archive dating from the inception of the NP. An exhibition will form part of this work, to be hosted by the Buxton International Festival July 2026, then held in the Bakewell Centre for 12 months. This will bring new insights into past PD landscapes to a public audience.

**3.23 Derbyshire Archaeology Day** had its largest ever audience in January 2026 (over 460 tickets sold) and 3,000 copies of Archaeology & Conservation in Derbyshire and the PD magazine are being freely distributed to libraries, centres and other outlets throughout the year.

**3.24 The Authority Plan 2023-28** enabling delivery aim sets out actions that will assist in the delivery of the Authority's essential business. **Objective B (Access):** To achieve timescales and follow processes for the statutory functions under Countryside and Rights of Way Act and Town and Country Planning Act includes the following essential business actions:

**3.24.1** Supporting the statutory functions of the Local Access Forum so that it continues to operate effectively as the statutory adviser on access and recreation within the NP. The Forum meets formally three times a year.

**3.24.2** Identify, maintain and enhance access to Access Land. The monitoring app continues to be used by rangers to record the state of all access points to open access land and for repairs to be undertaken, including upgrading stiles with gates wherever possible.

### 3 Recommendation

**1. To note progress in delivering to the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2023-28 and Authority Plan Welcoming Place aim and targets.**

### 5. Corporate Implications

#### a. Legal

Pursuant to section 65(5) of the Environment Act 1995, the Authority has power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to the accomplishment of its statutory purposes. These projects and activities fall within the Authority's statutory purposes. Pursuant to sections 5 and 11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the Authority must deliver to the statutory purposes and statutory duty, respectively, when carrying out its work. Monitoring the

Authority's progress against the aims and objectives set out in the NPMP will enable appropriate scrutiny and safeguard legal compliance.

b. Financial

Activities in the early years of the Authority Plan and NPMP 2023-28 had resources identified to deliver them. Further organisational change during 2025/26 has again included a reduction in core funded engagement capacity which will impact on the ability to develop and manage externally-funded engagement projects. Some level of financial support from the Authority will still be required as many funders require a cash or in-kind contribution and many do not contribute to overhead costs. Current and proposed contributions to externally funded Authority priority projects will be kept under review. As the revised structure and three-year Defra settlement are fully implemented the Authority's "Welcoming Place" activities will need to be kept under review.

c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan

The activities described in this report contribute to a number of our policies and legal obligations:

- The NPMP and Authority Plan as described in para 2.2. above.
- The Authority Plan 2023–28 Enabling delivery Aim: The Authority is inspiring, pioneering and enabling in delivering the National Park vision; Objective B (Access): To achieve timescales and follow processes for the statutory functions under Countryside and Rights of Way Act and Town and Country Planning Act.

d. Risk Management

The main risk to delivering the Welcoming Place aim is resources for the Authority (organisational change, further reductions for engagement capacity, reducing revenue budget), key partners and the wider economy. Recent organisational changes have severely reduced the breadth and depth of capacity to connect with communities, and provide services where all are inspired to enjoy, care for and connect to the special qualities which restricts capacity to deliver Welcoming Place initiatives going forward. Identified risks include maintaining partnerships and networks, the impacts of closing educational visit sites at Macclesfield Forest and potentially LDC at Longshaw, loss of capacity to obtain external funding for future Community engagement, Health and Well-being, Junior Rangers and Ambassador Schools activities.

e. Net Zero

Climate change and its impacts feature in all engagement activities. A connection to the place is encouraged as research shows this leads to positive pro-environmental behaviours. Engagement activities highlight good practice and encourage personal responsibility to take positive action. A focus on reaching out and engaging with communities that do not traditionally work with the Authority; deepen the knowledge and understanding of those that do in order to encourage connection to the place and responsible pro-environmental behaviours, including sustainable transport use. Whilst this work will continue under the new model activities will be less.

f. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The delivery of the Welcoming Place aim speaks directly to the ambition of ensuring equity of access (physical and intellectual) to the NP. The Authority's Equality Plan will need to be reviewed taking account of the Diverse Audience Plan.

**6. Background papers (not previously published)**

None.

**7. Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Access for All Project Funding Update.

Appendix 2 - Youth Impact Collective Update.

**Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date**

Suzanne Fletcher, Head of Landscape and Engagement, 16 March 2026

**Responsible Officer, Job Title**

Phil Mulligan, CEO

## **Appendix 1 – Access for All Funding 2025/26**

### **What is involved?**

Defra's Access for All Programme provides funding to the Peak District National Park to make it more accessible for people of all ages, abilities and needs, to help bring the benefits of spending time in nature to everyone.

In 2025/26, capital funding of £255.9k for improvements to infrastructure and information was provided. The funding is for assets created or acquired, not maintenance.

### **Why is it important?**

The funding provides the financial support to allow focus on the development of accessibility hubs and accessible routes. This provides the places, facilities, equipment, and information needed to build confidence in accessing the special qualities and amazing experiences of the Peak District National Park.

### **Who is involved in delivery?**

The project lead is the Access and Rights of Way Officer. The project team involves Property, Trails, Cycle-hire, Countryside Maintenance and Projects Team, and Rangers. It includes inputs from Peak Park Conservation Volunteers, and IT.

### **What's been delivered in 2025/26?**

- A Changing Place and proposed Miles without Stiles route at Trentabank
- A proposed new Miles without Stiles and tramper route at Derwent Dam
- Accessibility improvements for enjoying nature at Torside and Minninglow
- Accessible gates and bus stop improvements
- An accessible woodland and outdoor classroom at Brunts Barn
- Fast charging e-bikes, e-trikes, wheelchair bikes, and an e-mountain trike
- A e-cargo bike and e-bikes for trails and ranger volunteers

### **How has the funding been supported?**

The Peak District Foundation has provided funding of £4k for maintenance work to complement the capital works delivered under this programme at Surprise View and Conksbury. Peak Park Conservation Volunteers and Ranger volunteers have supported this work.

### **What's next**

Defra have indicated the availability of further funding for 2026/27 and beyond. A separate report in relation to this will be provided, along with the 2025/26 project breakdown.

An active travel plan has been produced for a high-level network of routes for walking, wheeling, cycling, and horse-riding in the National Park linking with future improvements for accessibility and access to nature. This funding can help develop the infrastructure

### More Miles

Proposed Miles without Stiles and tramper route at Derwent Dam – Phase 1  
Cost £15.2k, 25 volunteer days



### More Places

Accessible Woodland at Brunts Barn – Cost £15.8k, 17 PPCV days



### More Mobility

New e-bikes and inclusive cycles, and equipment for volunteers – Cost £107.2k



## Appendix 2 - Young People's Volunteering Pathway – Youth Impact Collective

The Youth Impact Collective (YIC) – for volunteers aged 18-30 – has made great strides in the last year (February 2025 to the present day). With the guidance of the Engagement Manager, Engagement Communities Project Officer and external facilitator from Animo Leadership, the group has developed a regular meeting pattern, established its aims, values and core roles within the group, and has engaged with a number of current projects within the Peak District National Park.



The Youth Impact Collective meets at least once a month – a mixture of in-person all-day weekend meetings and evening online meetings. Personal Development plans for the Core members of the group have been established, with five members of the group appointed into core roles. These core roles include: Chair, Co-Chair, and Project Leads for Welcoming Place and Nature.



Throughout this past year, the Youth Impact Collective has established connections within the Peak District National Park Authority and further afield. Three volunteers from the group presented to the Members Board in March 2025. Two volunteers presented at the Future Countryside Conference hosted at Chatsworth in May 2025. In October 2025, a volunteer of the Youth Impact Collective presented to the Local Access Forum. A number of the Youth Impact Collective attended the Campaign for National Parks New Perspectives event at Parliament in December 2025.

Influenced by discussions in the initial meetings back in February 2025, one member of the Youth Impact Collective has successfully applied for, and been appointed as, the Secretary of State Appointed Member of the Board for the Peak District National Park.

Throughout the last year, YIC volunteers have attended the Leadership course established by Animo Leadership. They have consulted on a range of projects within the Peak District

National Park, including assessing the Moors for the Future Wildfire Social Media Campaign and consulting on the North Lees Heritage Lottery Fund bid. In the coming month, YIC will be acting as a focus group for the People of the Peak project. Discussions for future consultations has included joining F.O.G meetings, consulting the Diverse Audiences Plan and developing a social media campaign for Moors for the Future.

**Moving forward:**

The Youth Impact Collective are aiming to expand its volunteer numbers and roles – roles to fill include: Communications Lead, Events Co-ordinator and Project Leads for Thriving Communities and Climate Change. We are looking to develop the representation of diverse audiences amongst our volunteer numbers from surrounding towns and cities.



The group will enhance connections between the Peak District National Park and other National Parks Youth Voice programs. In May 2026, three members of the Youth Impact Collective will be attending the Protected Landscape Youth Voice conference hosted by the North York Moors National Park Authority as part of this.

We will be continuing to expand the Youth Impact Collective’s understanding of the teams and projects within the Peak District National Park Authority, with the aim to develop sound working relationships with PDNPA staff and to inform on projects throughout the Authority.

**THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE EXEMPT, CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS.**

**PLEASE GO TO THE PART B AGENDA ITEMS.**

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