

**NPE****Item 16**

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019

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## **NATIONAL PARKS SUPPORTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING – REPORT FROM THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

**Purpose:** To report back on the work, and findings of the Task and Finish Group, and consider its suggested recommendations for next steps.

### **Recommendations:**

Directors are invited to:

- To note policy context;
- To confirm support for the universal offer and action plan around prevent, restore, excel;
- To support further national advocacy through NPE including aligning with the NHS 10- year plan- map three-point offer against 10-year outcomes, and refreshing the accord with PHE;
- To advise on how a clear mandate from England's NPAs can be achieved;
- To advise on how the Task and Finish Group can support the implementation of delivery of the actions

### **1. Introduction and summary of the task**

**1.1.** The Group was asked to examine the offer on health and wellbeing that National Parks can provide and to give advice to the NPE Board.

**1.2** Each Authority was asked to nominate NPA members to sit on the board.

Final membership of the Task and finish group -

Members	Andrea Davis (Member, Exmoor NPA and Chair of the group) Jean Davidson (Member, Northumberland NPA) Sarah Oswald (Member North York Moors NPA)
Officers	Alison Barnes (Chief Executive, New Forest NPA Lead NPO for Health) Paul Hamblin (NPE Executive Director) Jim Mitchell (Officer, New Forest NPA) Sarah Wilkes (Officer, Peak District NPA)

Health advisors      Tim Chapman (Health and Wellbeing Lead, PHE)  
                                  Tina Henry (Consultant in Public Health)

**1.3** The group met in London at the National Parks England Offices on 19 July and 22 October 2019. There was input from the National Park health leads group throughout and there was a sub-group meeting in Reading on 04 September and a meeting of the National Park Health leads on 24 September which discussed the approach in detail. This paper represents the collective views of the Task and Finish Group.

**1.4** Task brief:

- Briefly review current activity by NPAs in promoting health and well-being and the strengths and weaknesses of this approach to date.
- Distil what the specific offer is that all NPAs may provide to society, with reference to the 10-year NHS Long Term Plan.
- Establish what the offer of partnership to the NHS would be.
- To consider evidence and advice from NHS England and Public Health England.
- To consider how delivery of a partnership might be resourced.
- To consider links to the charity sector.
- To develop conclusions on the basis of evidence wherever possible.
- Report on progress and make key recommendations to the NPE Board.

**1.5.** In between the Task and Finish Group being established and concluding its work, NPE also submitted the Roadmap to the Glover Review, and reinforced this through a Roundtable with Julian Glover. Health and well-being featured prominently amongst our five big costed ambitions, calling for ‘*A strong new partnership with the NHS to improve people’s health wellbeing and recovery.*’

## **2. National context**

### **2.1 Health policy – public sector**

The main driver for health policy has been the development of the [NHS Long Term Plan](#). Whilst the Plan is primarily seeking to ensure the NHS is sustainable as a public service, it also signals a shift in thinking with greater appreciation of the importance of preventing ill-health and disease. As the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, remarked at the PHE Conference, “*we need to move from essentially a National Hospital Service to a genuinely National Health Service*”. Various implementation plans are now in development. The Secretary of State has been a champion of encouraging more healthy lifestyles and launched a [Prevention Green Paper](#) in the summer. The paper sees the 2020s as being the “*decade of proactive, predictive and personalised prevention*”. This will involve more targeted support, tailored lifestyle advice, personalised care and protection against future threats. The Green Paper covered both physical and mental

health. As well as the more conventional topics of smoking cessation, improved diet and increased physical activity – the Green Paper also gives a boost to the role of social prescribing, and acknowledges the health benefits of being outdoors. The Secretary of State has referred to childhood obesity and to mental health as his priorities. Consultation on this closed this month and it is expected that it will be followed by a Prevention White Paper.

## **2.2 Third sector partners- activity of health organisations**

There are a wide range of third sector health and wellbeing partners at a national and local level, from charities to community groups. At a national level the Richmond group, consisting of major national health charities, collaborate and influence policy. The National Outdoors for All Working Group also brings together academics and charities on this agenda. Locally NPAs have projects and relationships with a range of charities and voluntary groups that support this agenda. As with all our work there is a clear role for NPAs in brokering collaborations around our objectives for health and wellbeing. We are not starting from scratch.

## **2.3 Environment policy- links to health and wellbeing**

There have been a number of references and links made between health and wellbeing and protected landscapes, not least the legislation from 70 years ago and the second purpose of National Parks having provenance as ‘breathing spaces’ for the nation. More recently, following the Natural Environment White Paper (2011), the importance of connection of people to nature for health and wellbeing has again come to the fore in policy.

### **2.3.1 8-Point Plan for England’s National Parks (2016-2020)**

The [plan](#), co-produced by National Parks England and Defra sets out eight areas for action – including health. It says, “National Park Authorities have already worked with Clinical Commissioning Groups to trial innovative schemes in mental health treatment. National Parks have a role to play in providing innovative solutions to these health challenges”. The Plan then includes two ambitions:

- Promote innovative schemes for National Parks to serve public health
- Realise the immense potential for outdoor recreation in National Parks.

This has paved the way for partnerships around health and an accord between PHE and National Parks England.

### **2.3.2 PHE/NPE accord**

The [PHE/NPE Accord](#) was launched in September 2017, with the support of Public Health Minister Steve Brine MP. It has provided a springboard for a number of more detailed conversations between NPAs and PHE staff, and an annual national workshop to track progress. The Accord seeks collaboration around policy; investment, and supporting linkage between NPA and public

health professionals. It also enables NPAs to draw on the evidence and data held by PHE to assist National Parks decision making at a local level.

### 2.3.3 25 Year Environment Plan

The [25 Year Environment Plan](#) published in January 2018 has a section in it about improving people's health through connecting with nature, it says:

*“We will launch a three-year ‘Natural Environment for Health and Wellbeing’ programme, focused on supporting local authorities, health organisations, health professionals, teachers and planners in promoting the natural environment as a pathway to good health and wellbeing. Mental health problems and early interventions will be an initial area of interest, however the programme will be charged with considering other health issues, such as obesity, where children and adults would benefit from better access to nature. To make sure that it reaches as many people as possible, we would welcome the programme being replicated at local level. Ideally, we would like access to the natural environment put at the heart of all local Health and Wellbeing Board strategies”.*

The Plan also talks about:

- supporting mental health therapies;
- sharing lessons on existing social prescribing and supporting the roll out of social prescribing across England.

### 2.3.4 Landscapes Review

The [Landscapes review](#) calls for renewed zeal for National Parks and puts health at the centre of its thinking on ‘landscapes for everyone’. It states:

*National Parks were created in part to provide a healing space, both mentally and physically, for the many who had given so much to protect our country during the Second World War. They were meant for everybody.*

There is a specific proposal that refers to health and wellbeing:

#### **Proposal 10: Landscapes that cater for and improve the nation's health and wellbeing**

It calls for:

- a new role for our national landscapes in helping the health of our nation, working with the NHS.
- Leadership- for us to be at the heart of this developing field, locally and nationally
- national conversations and relationships to be established with the Department for Health and Social Care, Public Health England and NHS England

- establish strong relationships with local public health teams, clinical commissioning groups and social care.
- our offer to be embedded in relevant strategies, policies and guidelines.

The review also mentions health and wellbeing in suggested revisions of the National Park purposes. Whilst these have not yet been responded to by Government, it is useful to note the reference to natural capital and prominence of connecting all parts of society to support health and wellbeing as an indication of the panel's thinking on the future role of protected landscapes.

### **3. What does this mean for our unique National Park Offer?**

A considerable amount of the Task and Finish Group's discussion has centred on answering the question: what is our unique national park offer; what our work for the inspiring landscapes and communities we serve can contribute alongside the offers of others? The excellent presentation from Dr William Bird at the recent 'New Horizons' National Parks UK Conference in the Yorkshire Dales described the importance of people, place and purpose in determining the likelihood of ill health (see Annex II). We represent exceptional places where there are huge opportunities for people to come together with a sense of purpose. In considering our unique offer it has become apparent that the way we work across people, place and purpose can be described as holistic, with many of our activities providing benefits to physical health, mental health and wellbeing, working across prevention and treatment.

In addition, a number of recurring themes have arisen in our discussions:

- Challenges of access – transport / physical / social
- Addressing areas of greatest need- e.g. urban communities and socially excluded
- How to realise the inspirational role of National Parks for the nation's health
- Working innovatively e.g. through digital and voluntary partnerships
- Working effectively with complex health sector governance
- Making the case for public money for public goods; demonstrating social and economic benefits.

### **Our unique national offer**

National Parks are inspirational places that improve the nation's health and wellbeing. They are places where people can find spectacular views, breathing space and nature and culture to lift the soul. England's National Parks are living landscapes where the communities who live in and around them, and the organisations who care for them, work together to welcome all sections of society.

We have a unique and universal offer to the nation. Visiting a National Park is a holistic experience which benefits both mental and physical health. The National Park idea was born at the same time as the NHS, stating "There can be few national purposes which, at so modest a cost, offer so large a prospect of health-giving happiness for the people".

Our holistic offer provides three elements that people need for health and wellbeing:

**People-** National Parks are places of partnership- between communities, organisations and visitors, where people are encouraged to explore. Those who face challenges to visit are helped to overcome them by professional staff, enthusiastic volunteers and welcoming communities.

**Place-** These beautiful places provide wide-ranging opportunities for connection to nature and culture- a proven way to benefit people's mental and physical health. They provide the space for health giving activity, taken individually, with families and friends or in organised groups, from short strolls to hill walking, from tree planting to wild swimming and from birdwatching to photography.

**Purpose-** National Park Authorities have a mission to inspire people to care for these special places and for the wider environment. They provide the opportunity for people to be a part of this mission whilst simultaneously caring for themselves through connection with them.

## **4. Our current local offer**

**4.1** Each NP has responded to drivers such as 8-point plan and PHE accord to develop local partnerships and approaches which are given as a snapshot of current activity in annex 1. The officers group also identified three areas of focus:

- young people's mental health
- people living with dementia
- those who encounter barriers to visiting National Parks

The areas of current work are summarised in the box below.

**Our current local offer**

- **Promoting accessible opportunities** for walking, cycling, and other activities to residents and visitors including those living in nearby towns and cities.
- Delivering a **statutory planning system**, safeguarding and promoting community health through its spatial policy and development management functions.
- Supporting **local activity partnerships** such as Walking for Health initiatives that support gradual, achievable increases in levels of exertion and challenge.
- Providing and facilitating investment in **infrastructure and management** for 21,946km of quality public rights of way in National Parks.
- Providing dedicated **outreach programmes** to support those with particular needs to access our National Parks and have safe, fulfilling experiences in these life-affirming places.
- Encouraging and facilitating **economic development** that supports employment for people who are often living in deep rural areas where opportunities are few.
- Providing meaningful **volunteering** experiences – approximately 57,400 volunteer days in 2017/18, encouraging physical activity, social interaction, confidence and a sense of purpose.
- **Working with schools** to enable young people to benefit from a closer connection with nature and memorable outdoor activities from an early age.
- **Supporting our local communities**, for example through Farm Liaison Officers who visit farmers in and can pick up signs of loneliness or economic stress.
- Providing **'ecosystem services'** for society, including high-quality and sustainable healthy food production, pure drinking water and good air quality, and storing and fixing carbon.
- National Park Authorities provide **healthy workplaces** for NPA staff and volunteers

## 5. Developing our offer

- 5.1 Drawing on our national and local experience we believe National Parks can provide profound inspirational experiences that can have a major impact on health and wellbeing. We have a good suite of projects and partnerships and can demonstrate influence nationally and locally especially through our partnership with PHE. However, we can build on our holistic offer for people, place and purpose to have greater impact. We now need to present this in a clear, compelling and legible way, so that we can scale our activity to meet the ambition of emerging policy. In our submission to the Landscapes Review

we essentially identified the opportunity for a holistic offer around three themes:

1. **Prevent**- providing prevention of ill-health in practice where mental and physical health and wellbeing is supported and enhanced;
2. **Restore** - drawing on the restorative benefit of National Parks through social prescribing in partnership with the NHS; and
3. **Excel** - delivering and inspiring excellence in natural health solutions

5.2 For each of these three themes the Task and Finish Group is suggesting three actions to further our collective work on health and wellbeing. It is this '3x3' action plan that we propose forms the basis of our offer working together as a family of protected landscapes.

## 6 Our offer and action plan

### 6.1 Prevent

What we want:

**Protected landscapes are recognised by the health sector as places to develop personal resilience and nurture good health and wellbeing.**

How do we propose do it?

Prevent 1- **Advocacy**- communicating our unique national offer to health professionals and third sector partners; develop an advocacy strategy

Prevent 2- **Signposting activities and opportunities available in National Parks** e.g. developing and presenting an online resource of the opportunities available to users

Prevent 3- **Supporting skills and driving standards and continuous learning**- developing a programme for staff in NPAs and with key partners e.g. PHE / Local Authority / Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)

### 6.2 Restore

What we want:

**Significant social prescribing activity taking place in and around protected landscapes.**

How do we propose to do it?

Restore 1- **Connect to link workers** in and around National Parks to ensure our offer is visible and taken up

Restore 2- Work with our partners to **develop new and build on existing** socially prescribed opportunities

Restore 3- **Evaluate our contribution to social prescribing** and scale up by making the case to the new National Academy for Social Prescribing for resources to realise potential.

### 6.3 Excel

What we want:

**National Parks are recognised as delivering and inspiring excellence in natural health solutions**

How do we propose to do it?

Excel 1- Initiate **a new national partnership between the NHS and National Parks England** and refresh the existing accord with PHE.

Excel 2- **Develop the regional partnership structure** to enable Protected Landscape / PHE clusters to share best practice and develop joint programmes.

Excel 3- **Develop partnerships between National Parks and academic institutions** to foster research and innovation; seek a common approach to return on investment based on work from North York Moors NPA (see Annex III).

## 7. Resourcing our offer- what we need

7.1 Resources, both our own and those of our partners, are crucial to delivery of our offer and action plan. Much has been achieved through existing resources, including:

- National Park England Health Lead Officers working group
- The Health Lead officers time in each NP (varies but is usually only one part of a wider role)
- Collaborative partnerships in the National Parks and at a national level- public, private and third sector
- National Park England staff resource
- Regional PHE Centres / NPA group activity

As might be expected, areas of emphasis, priorities and relationships have varied between NPAs. However, we have achieved early progress and profile on a number of initiatives (see Annex I) and recent new collaborations with health professionals including:

- The New Forest National Park and South Downs National Park Authority have together with PHE secured £100k from the Cabinet Office to deliver a project to explore how public services work together with a focus on what helps public services work together. Delivery by summer 2020.

- A major conference is planned for 20 May 2020, entitled National Parks for Health at Bournemouth University, organised by the Southern NPs and PHE Centres.
- National profile and advocacy - new meeting opportunities are being created with DHSC and the NHS England Social Prescribing teams to share our ambitions and strengthen links

**7.2** To scale up our offer and make it truly universal, there is more work to do and we have identified a number of ways we might approach this including:

- Regional lottery funding
- A Defra ask for resources- as per our Landscapes Review response
- CCG / Public health support for specific schemes / approaches
- Funding for social prescribing academy / NHS
- Where resources have been identified to deliver on the Landscapes Review, NPAs to employ a health and wellbeing officer to lead on this work within that National Park.
- Transport grants and schemes- ways to address physical and financial barriers to accessing the National Park e.g. working with ADEPT and transport authorities to seek solutions
- Local economic partnership support through understanding and realisation of 'natural health capital'

**7.3** Most crucial to progress will be the support and commitment of the family of NPAs to take forward our unique offer for health and wellbeing. We have the opportunity for National Parks to be inspirational places that make a unique and important contribution to the nation's health and wellbeing.

## **8. Recommendations:**

**8.1 To note the policy context.**

**8.2 To confirm support for the universal offer and action plan around prevent, restore, excel.**

**8.3 To support further national advocacy through NPE including aligning with the NHS 10-year plan- map three-point offer against 10-year outcomes and refreshing the accord with PHE.**

**8.4 To advise on how a clear mandate from England's NPAs can be achieved.**

**8.5 To advise on how the Task and Finish Group can support the implementation of delivery of the actions.**

## **Annex I**

See attached table – snapshot of activity in National Parks on Health and Wellbeing.

## Annex II

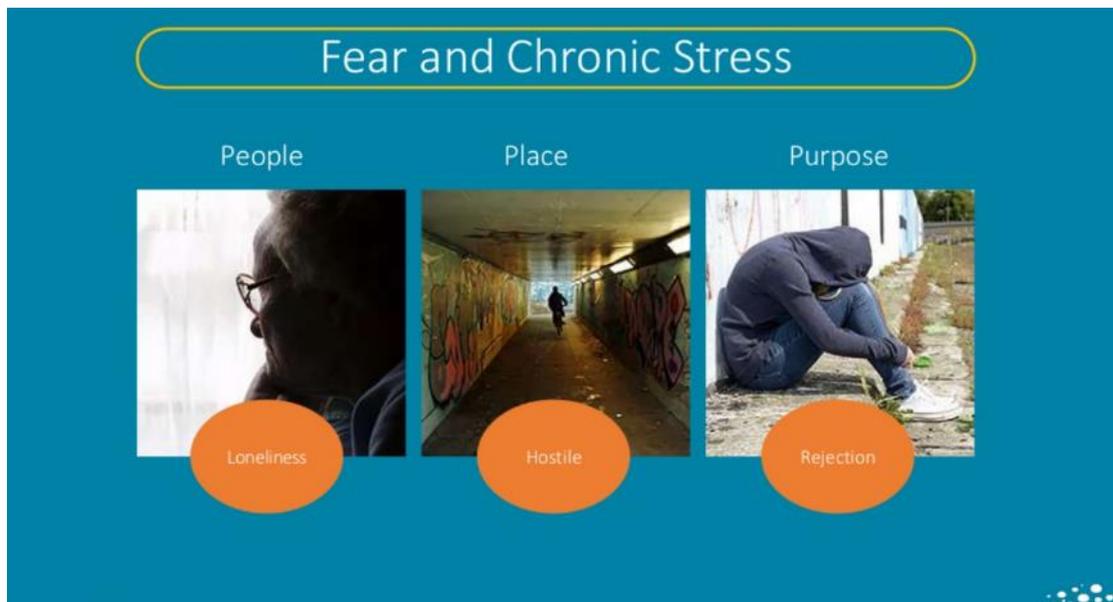
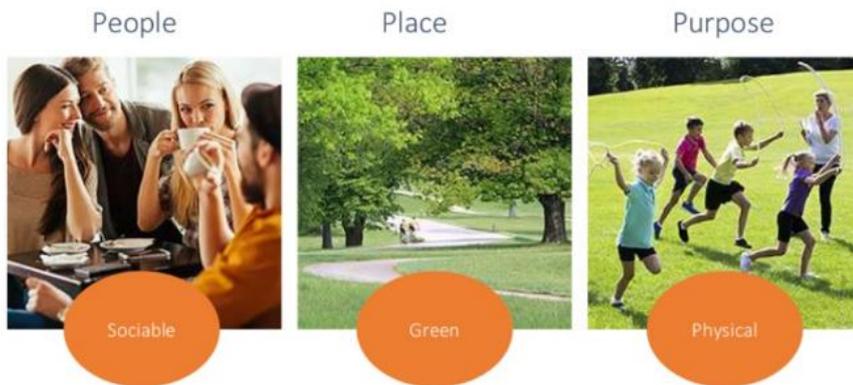
Dr William Bird's presentation to the UK National Park's conference 2019

Can national parks do more to promote the health benefits of getting out in the great outdoors?

Full presentation available [here](#).

From Dr William Bird's presentation here are two slides that illustrate the impact of good and poor people, place and purpose.

Our factory setting is to be in a sociable group, active environment and have a purpose



## Annex III

### North York Moors National Park Authority Measuring Health and Well-Being Impact

2018

The [report](#) calculates the Social Return on Investment (SROI) for the North York Moors National Park Authority (NYMNP) in respect of its health and well-being impact. SROI measures the social value created when organisations engage in activities and projects that make a difference to individuals and society. In terms of health and well-being, it is increasingly recognised that National Parks such as NYMNP have a crucial role in connecting people with nature, raising activity levels, facilitating outdoor recreation, and providing space for tranquillity.

The report specifically measures the health and well-being impact on visitors and volunteers, and in respect of DEFRA-funded NYMNP activity. Therefore, the report does not measure SROI for all possible stakeholder groups and nor does it measure the health and well-being impact associated with activities funded by grants awarded by other bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. Given the short turnaround time for the completion of the report and limits to available data, discrete initiatives - such as those with schools, community champions, explorer clubs, and guided walks - are not measured. This means that, while the SROI stated here is considerable, it is almost certainly an under-estimate.

The report estimates that every £1 invested by DEFRA generates approximately £7 of health and well-being benefits. Future work will be required to evaluate the impact of discrete projects and wider activities to produce an aggregated figure for the overall health and well-being contribution of NYMNP. This progression from an initial 'conservative baseline SROI figure' to a more comprehensive accounting for impact over time is normal for any SROI process.

*Since the original report, published in 2018, the North York Moors National Park Authority has been awarded a Stage One development from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help its Education department double its current outreach provision. As part of this, the Authority will be extending its SROI work and evaluating the impact that the Park's 'Young Ranger' and 'Explorer Club' schemes have on families and young people living in North Yorkshire and Teesside. This is due to be carried during 2019.*