

13. OUTSIDE BODY AND CONFERENCE FEEDBACK REPORT

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| Name of Body | National Parks England (NPE) – AGM and Board Meeting |
| Date of Meeting | 7 June 2021 |
| Member in attendance | Andrew McCloy |
| Supporting Officer | Sarah Fowler |
| Issues raised at the meeting of significance to the Authority | |
| 1. | <p>AGM: I am proud to report that I was elected as the new Chair of National Parks England for the year ahead. My Deputy is Ian Phillips, Chair of the South Downs National Park. Directors approved the accounts and minutes of the last AGM.</p> |
| 2. | <p>Board Meeting: I delivered the Chair’s Report, summarising what has been an eventful year with both Covid-19 and the Landscapes Review having a major impact on our work. Despite this, there has been considerable activity across NPE’s four strategic aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Climate change - position statement, carbon baseline work underway, EOI to COP26 for a presentation at the international event later this year; (ii) Wildlife and nature recovery – the Environment Bill is making progress, Nature Recovery Networks are being planned against the backdrop of the Government's 30 x 30 ambitions; (iii) Sustainable farming and land management – the imminent launch of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme is a major development for protected landscapes as we move towards shaping the new Environmental Land Management scheme; (iv) Landscapes for everyone – the record numbers of NP visitors has presented a unique opportunity to reach out to new and diverse audiences, and show the role of protected landscapes in peoples' physical and mental health during the pandemic. NPE’s Visitor Management group has looked at how we communicate and work with the public to reduce the negative impacts to the environment, and they have provided regular feedback to Defra. <p>Collaboration: We have just signed a tripartite agreement with the NAAONB and Natural England on joint working to maximise the effectiveness of our work for people and nature.</p> <p>New Defra Minister: Lord (Richard) Benyon has worked with NPE in the past and replaces Lord Gardiner. We have also met with Shadow opposition leader for Defra, Luke Pollard MP, to discuss NPE’s priorities.</p> <p>NPUK: Mindful of the inevitable focus on England via the Landscapes Review, I made it clear that it was important to maintain a fruitful relationship with Scottish and Welsh NPs and keep a UK perspective.</p> <p>NPE: Despite the challenge of having 1.5 FTE staff resource, NPE has still launched the four Delivery Plans, responded to numerous consultations, and re-started the National Parks All Party Parliamentary Group. We have already had two APPG’s, on health and wellbeing, and nature recovery (with an excellent presentation by Sarah Fowler). Both were well attended and the APPG Chair, Sir Gary Streeter, is engaged and enthusiastic. As the new Chair I then offered some thoughts on what promises to be an interesting</p> |

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| | <p>next 12 months. The ten English national parks are united by a common purpose - and this should start our conversations, not end them. Despite some different views, we need to present one coherent and collective voice, look for consensus amongst ourselves.</p> <p>The Landscapes Review (and the Government's likely response) signals change ahead, but it is already happening; and where it improves NP outcomes and delivery then we should welcome that change and embrace it. We need to be at the heart of this modernising agenda, so long it delivers lasting improvements for people and nature.</p> <p>There will be some difficult issues to address, such as around governance, but we need to make the distinction about what's best for national parks in the long run as distinct from simply the national park authorities. That said, change for change sake is pointless. Centralising power and diminishing local delivery with no palpable long term gain achieves nothing and I will defend our organisations and our people when required.</p> <p>But NPE has already showed its collective vision and appetite for improvement, such as through our four strategic delivery plans, and we need to take this positive approach on further: show politicians and civil servants alike our appetite for change; offer up creative, forward-looking ideas; define the role of NPs going forwards, especially our local place-shaping and decision-making; recognise that the diversity of our parks is a strength; and quietly work up a coalition of support, including MPs.</p> |
| 3. | <p>Lead NPO update and other reports:</p> <p>Richard Leafe (Lake District CEO) gave an update on progress on delivery of NPE's four delivery plans; the latest on when we can expect the (much delayed) Written Ministerial Statement on the Government's response to the Landscapes Review and likely next steps; an update on sustainable tourism (the English National Parks Experience Collection) and the Government's planning White Paper.</p> <p>Farming lead officer, Kevin Bishop (Dartmoor CEO), gave a confidential briefing on the FiPL announcement and the implications for NPs and AONBs. He also paid tribute to the core officer working group which has been liaising weekly with Defra to achieve this significant funding development, including PDNPA's Sue Fletcher.</p> <p>Hoda Grey, NPE's interim Executive Officer, presented NPE's one-year Business Plan for 2021/22, which is strategically focused on delivering against NPE's key four priorities and responding to the Government's work on the Landscapes Review.</p> |
| <p>Issues on which the views of Authority Members are sought</p> | |
| 1. | <p>To note the above</p> |
| <p>Relevant documents such as reports and hyperlinks</p> | |
| 1. | <p>National Parks England represents the ten English National Park Authorities and provides a strong, collective and expert voice at a national level. Its ten Directors are the current Chairs of the respective National Park Authorities and an NPA chief executive acts as NPE lead officer for a year at a time. NPE has a small London-based staff. For more details go to: https://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/home</p> |