

7. **ACCESS FUNDING (SAS)**

Purpose of the Report

1. The report provides an update on the support for improving access infrastructure in the National Park. A related report on potential funding is provided in Part B of this meeting. This funding is awaiting public release and is currently confidential.

Key Issues

2.
 - Access infrastructure underpins inclusivity and engagement.
 - Access improvements support the emerging objectives and actions of the National Park Management Plan Review.

Recommendations

3. **(i) To note the current position on Access Funding.**

How does this contribute to policies and legal obligations?

4. (i) National Park Management Plan 2018-23

Relevant areas of impact:

- A National Park for everyone – relevant actions are to overcome physical and perceived barriers to access.
- Encouraging enjoyment with understanding - relevant actions are: to balance opportunities for enjoyment with conserving a fragile environment; to ensure shared responsibility.

- (ii) Corporate Strategy 2019-24

Relevant outcome: A National Park loved and supported by diverse audiences.

2022/23 strategic interventions for:

- Greater audience reach amongst under-represented groups – Implement our diverse audience plan providing inclusive health, education and accessibility activities, and modernising digital channels that better align with the audiences we want to reach
- A strong identity and reputation driving positive awareness and engagement. – Use research to develop a plan to better understand our existing and potential audiences to increase public connection with the National Park.

- (iii) National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan 2023-28

The review of the NPMP continues with an emerging draft 20-year vision: “By 2043 the Peak District National Park is exemplary in its response to nature recovery and climate change. Its Special Qualities have been significantly enhanced. It is a cherished and inclusive place where all are inspired to care and communities thrive.” The emerging draft 20-year aims are:

- The Peak District National Park is more resilient and net-zero by 2040 through its exemplary response to climate change.
- The Peak District National Park is a resilient landscape in which nature, beauty, and cultural heritage are significantly enhanced.
- The Peak District National Park is a welcoming place where all are inspired to enjoy, care for and connect to its special qualities.
- The Peak District National Park communities are thriving and sustainable places where all generations can live healthy and fulfilled lives.

- (iv) National Park Landscape Strategy, Review 2022

Draft objective:

Improve the connectivity of open access land and the rights of way network to allow for enjoyment of the landscape by a greater range of users while maintaining character, tranquillity, remoteness and wildness.

(v) Diversity Action Plan

Health and Wellbeing themes:

- Protected landscapes are recognised by the health sector as places to develop personal resilience and nurture good health and wellbeing – easily accessible online guides and materials, signposting activities and opportunities available.
- Significant social prescribing activity, and targeted projects that address health and social inequalities that amplify our reach both within and outside the National Park – work with our partners to develop new and build on existing project opportunities.

Background Information

5. The Authority's statutory role and work in partnership on Access and Rights of Way is supported through additional sources of funding. The emerging theme of a 'Welcoming Place' is proposed to be reported to the January 2023 Programmes and Resources committee meeting (Minute 65/22)

Access & Rights of Way

6. The Authority is the Access Authority and Relevant Authority for access land and has powers in relation to the making of orders for public rights of way and green lanes. The Authority is not the Highway Authority, but works closely in partnership with its seven constituent councils, landowners, land managers, and farmers for enhancing access, rights of way, and the unclassified road network to meet National Park purposes and outcomes.

Inclusive Access

7. The National Park Management Plan's outcome of a National Park for Everyone, seeks to overcome barriers to access so that everyone can experience its special qualities, including those with limited mobility, and to build up the confidence of those who do not feel able to visit and encourage them to come. This inclusivity is set out in the emerging objectives and actions.
8. On access and rights of way infrastructure, inclusivity is facilitated through the removal of barriers such as stiles, narrow gates, and steps. It also includes widening, regrading, improved surfacing, and new and promoted routes such as [Miles without Stiles](#). This is supported by mobility equipment, inclusive/adaptive cycles, disabled toilets and Changing Places, designated disabled car parking, interpretation, signage, and seating.

Funding

9. Access improvements are funded through the Foundation and donations to the Authority's Access Fund and from sponsorship and sales of the Miles without Stiles handbook. Other funding initiatives include the South West Peak Landscape Partnership, the Landscape Enhancement Initiative, work by partner organisations, and the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme. Maintenance, repairs, and projects by the Highway Authorities, and the funding for these, contributes towards access improvements and other objectives, including conservation.

Delivery

10. In-house expertise is provided by Access and Rights of Way, Countryside Maintenance and Property Support Team, Rangers, and Peak Park Conservation Volunteers. More

complex, specialist, and significant work usually requires external inputs. The Highway Authorities' work on their assets may also be supported by funding for work undertaken on their behalf. In the case of Derbyshire County Council, this is set out by a Service Level Agreement with the Authority. The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme supports delivery by landowners, farmers, and local contractors.

Summary

11. Improvements to access infrastructure embeds inclusivity. This is focused for the provision of Miles without Stiles routes and is in turn dependent on the funding available and the capacity to support this.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

12. **Financial**
There is a current level of funding which provides for progress at a level commensurate with capacity.
13. **Risk Management**
There is an element of reputational risk to the Authority in respect of expectations on the part of third parties not being met. This report clarifies that the deliverability of access improvements is currently being undertaken within realistic parameters. The continuing ability to handle expenditure relating to infrastructure improvements remains important in order to meet grant and contractual conditions and in relation to the statutory functions of the Authority for Access and Rights of Way and Planning.
14. **Sustainability**
The report addresses sustainability issues in the context of both the National Park Management Plan and the Authority's statutory purposes, duty and legal powers.
15. **Equality**
The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 have been met in the consideration of actions and the Authority will continue to have regard to its duties under the Act to address inequalities in its visitor and audience profile.
16. **Climate Change**
The work on accessibility provides a mechanism for the Authority to engage with visitors to the National Park regarding issues associated with climate change and for engagement with actions to protect its assets.
17. **Background papers:**
None.
18. **Appendices**
None.
19. **Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date**
Sue Smith, Access & Rights of Way Officer – 24 August 2022