

7. THRIVING COMMUNITIES AIM OVERVIEW (BJT)

1. Purpose of the report

To inform Members about the Peak District National Park Management Plan (NPMP) and Authority Plan thriving communities aims and objectives, the Authority's progress since October 2021, and what this means for the future.

2. Key issues

- Defining Thriving and Sustainable Communities
- Maintaining and increasing direct engagement with communities
- Delivering affordable housing
- Ensuring key infrastructure that fits with conservation aims
- Ensuring a thriving business sector

3. Recommendations

- 1. To note the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2023-28 aim on Thriving Communities, progress in responding to this since October 2021, and the platform this provides for delivering our new objectives.**

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

4. In pursuing the statutory purposes defined for National Parks in the Environment Act 1995, National Park Authorities have a related duty to seek to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities in the area.
5. The key tool available to the Authority is the adoption of core policies in its Local Plan which can drive exceptional routes for development based on the local needs and circumstances of the area (accessibility, affordability of housing stock, availability of local employment, and aging demographic profile).
6. Beyond its planning function the Authority must work closely with partner organisations to bring about a more sustainable living and working environment for the local population.
7. Members agreed at the 22 July 2022 Authority meeting to align the schedule of reports for Programmes and Resources to the National Park Management Plan 2023-28 aims (minute reference 65/22). Members adopted the National Park Management Plan 2023-28 at the 2 December 2022 Authority meeting (minute reference 98/22).

Background and Progress

8. The July 2022 Authority meeting agreed to align the programmes for Programmes and Resources to the National Park Management Plan 2023-28 aims, and that the third paper would focus on the Thriving Communities aim.
9. 'Thriving Communities' is prominent in the Vision, is one of the Aims and has two associated objectives in the National Park Management Plan 2023-28 and the Authority Plan 2023-28. See paragraph 16.

10. Since October 2021 significant progress has been made, by the Authority and partners, on delivering these objectives and fulfilling these aims as follows.

11. **Thriving and Sustainable Communities Definition**

We worked with residents, local authority partners and the Peak Park Parishes Forum to agree and formally adopt this definition¹. This definition is important because it informs and guides how the Authority and partners should work together in pursuance of our statutory duty and is now embedded in the NPMP as an appendix. The definition sets clear challenges for us and through the NPMP and Authority plan we are able to address these via the objectives, targets and actions we set. Future activity will focus on delivery but the definition itself will be reviewed periodically to make sure it is still relevant and to maintain 'ownership' with parishes and other stakeholders.

12. **Affordable housing delivery**

Our local communities have told us (in the Definition) that they need 'safe, energy efficient homes in a mixture of tenures so that a diverse population can be sustained, those with local roots can remain or return, and family groups across the generations can stay together'. Our Management Plan is responsive to this, pledging that the Authority and its key local authority partners will work together to deliver affordable housing.

The Government's view is that National Parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted (open-market) housing and overall that the scale of development should be limited. This is a particularly important principle for the development of greenfield sites in an area with the highest levels of protection for landscape and scenic beauty. However there has long been scope for a positive "enhancement-led" approach which drives the restoration of buildings and brownfield sites. In doing so this provides a route for new blood to enhance the vibrancy of our communities. The table below shows the numbers of homes constructed since 2006/7. (The number of permissions will be higher.)

Addressing local needs is achieved by exception to the general position of restraint but includes various opportunities for young families, carer needs, agricultural workers and general flexibility for ancillary accommodation to allow for growing families and farmer succession whilst responding to the conservation and enhancement of our built environment.

Alongside this we also support development for holiday accommodation as this helps pursue our second legal purpose while supporting the conservation of buildings and promoting local business development, including farm diversification.

¹ <https://reports.peakdistrict.gov.uk/npmp2023/docs/appendices/thriving-and-sustainable-communities-definition.html>

Housing completion by application type:	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Grand Total	% of all completions
Open Market	25	34	82	29	27	25	14	15	23	11	54	25	22	11	33	33	32	495	40%
Local Needs	79	4	30	20	21	27	15	1	1	4	7	1	6	9	34	7	3	269	22%
Agricultural	2	2	8	1	5	6	3	2	1	2	4	4	5	0	1	0	3	49	4%
Ancillary	6	5	17	1	8	7	1	3	3	1	4	8	7	1	0	8	4	84	7%
Agricultural or Holiday	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0%
Ancillary or Holiday	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	3	1	3	1	0	1	3	21	2%
Holiday	18	23	68	8	23	41	0	3	20	9	26	12	15	11	0	24	16	317	26%
Grand Total	130	72	205	59	84	106	33	24	54	28	98	51	58	33	68	73	61	1237	100%

Delivery of affordable homes continues to be a challenging issue and we would like to increase the proportion of homes that respond to local needs and affordability and through the review of the local plan we are exploring ways to do that. Consultants (Litchfields) are currently undertaking Park-wide population forecasts and housing needs assessments to inform our next local plan.

13. National Park Authority Community Planning Menu

The Authority has a longstanding commitment to giving advice and assistance to parish councils and other groups writing statutory neighbourhood plans and other broader community such plans, with a successful track record of delivery.

14. Alongside other partners such as the Council for Voluntary Services, Rural Action Derbyshire and the Integrated Health Boards the Authority seeks to work pro-actively with local residents, community groups and parish councils. Examples include sustainability groups like Hope Valley Climate Action, Minerals Liaison Groups and communities seeking the delivery of sites for local needs affordable housing. We offer the 'communities small grant' to fund or part-fund community-led projects and can give advice and assistance in all matters relating to thriving and sustainable communities, linking and signposting to partner organisations where this is appropriate.

15. We make huge efforts to engage residents and stakeholders in the development of strategic planning policy. In the early phase of plan review during the pandemic we adapted to on-line stakeholder workshops and for the statutory phase we are using an industry-leading on-line portal which we hope will enable more individuals (not just stakeholder groups) to have their say on the new local plan.

Proposals

16. The 'Thriving Communities' Aims and Objectives in the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2023-28 (see Appendix 1 for more detail) and Authority Plan 2023-28 are:

Aim: Peak District National Park communities are thriving and sustainable places where all generations can live healthy and fulfilled lives

Objective: To support sustainable communities by improving opportunities for affordable housing and connection to services.

Objective: To promote a flourishing economy that is in accord with nature recovery and climate change mitigation.

The new Management Plan supports many wider objectives that support thriving communities, e.g. in relation to energy, transport, wildlife, volunteering and Estate Planning. The following are some specific areas which underpin the above objectives.

Local Plan Review

17. The strategic policy review will seek to address long standing challenges of affordable housing delivery and address some of the demographic pressures facing the National Park, with a net gain focus on design, character and wildlife. The plan will also address the full range of transport, energy and employment issues impacting on sustainable lifestyles, including the need for business expansion in sustainable locations

Affordable Housing and Second Homes Issues

18. Officers will work closely with local Housing Authorities to uplift and unblock the delivery of much needed homes also input to national debates on second and holiday home issues impacting on the sustainability of local communities

Mobile and Broadband Improvements

19. The Authority will work closely with the Government and County Council partners on the shared rural network (mobile mast roll out), advocating sensitive siting and design, and through Project Gigabit (broadband roll out)

Supporting Local Business

20. The Authority will continue to host and enable Business Peak District to thrive, and provide a voice for rural business. The group retains its independence, driven by the business community and strong local partnership and with secretariat support provided by East Midlands Chamber. A successful networking event in June 2023 reinvigorated the group and explored the scope for further training and networking. In addition our local authority partners have begun to roll out the UK Shared Prosperity Fund offering grants and advice to local businesses.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

21. **Financial:**

All proposals are costed and within baseline budget.

22. **Risk Management:**

All proposals allow for Authority input to advocate National Park purposes are embedded.

23. **Sustainability:**

Sustainability is embedded through policy, the new definition and officer inputs to partnership working.

24. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:**

Embedded through policy and the new definition.

25. **Climate Change:**

Embedded through policy and the new definition.

26. **Background papers - None**

27. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Thriving Communities extract from NPMP (Objectives and Targets)

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Brian Taylor, Head of Planning, 13 July 2023.