

Expression of Interest for hosting the UK National Parks Communications Function

Submitted by the Peak District National Park Authority – 16th June 2023

The Peak District National Park Authority would like to express interest in hosting the UK National Parks Communication function (referred to as UK Comms function).

This expression of interest has been developed by the PDNPA management team with input from our communications manager. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority are supportive of this expression of interest. We have been invited to set our expression out in five areas as follows:

- Set out how the host authority will support deliver the purpose, objectives and learning outcomes identified in the agreed proposal.
- Detail who will be involved in the co-ordination and delivery of the host function, specifying relevant experience and capabilities to discharge the role.
- Explain how the hosting will deliver the brief on behalf of UK NPAs; outline how support of HR, finance and ICT will be structured and performance evaluated.
- Set out the costs associated with the proposed hosting arrangement and how these would be charged within the budget envelope. Projection and clarity of 3-year budget costs will be an important consideration in the EOI evaluation process but not the only factor.
- Detail proposed advantages of your organisation hosting and how any risks to delivery will be managed.

Due to the short time scales involved in developing our expression of interest and capacity issues for the team members involved, our expression has been kept as short and simple as possible, whilst trying to give the evaluation panel the information they need to make a judgement. As such the expression will be structured using the five areas above.

1. How we will support the purpose, learning and objectives in the brief

We believe the PDNPA is well placed to host the UK Comms function. In recent years we have been at the forefront of hosting collaborative UK-wide project delivery across topics as broad as inbound tourism and business support (the award-winning National Parks Experiences Collection), youth engagement through 'Generation Green' and hosting innovative Environmental Land Management tests and trials for Defra and Farming in Protected Landscapes programme-related and projects.

In all cases, these programmes have been supported by multi-million pound grant funding packages administered by the Authority. This experience sits alongside the 20+ year delivery of the Moors for the Future Partnership and more recent regional stakeholder collaborations such as the South West Peak Landscape Partnership.

The Peak District is often at the sharp end of issues that will be very relevant to the work of the UK Comms function, such as visitor diversity and responsible behaviours, upland and lowland landscape management, wildlife conservation challenges and a large visitor footfall in excess of 13m per annum. Our central location to the UK, surrounded by large conurbations, also means we experience the interface of urban communities, visitors, local residents and those making a living within a national park.

Our central location within the UK also gives additional benefits to the UK Comms function. There will be times when it is necessary for the UK Comms function to meet internally and with representatives from national parks across the UK. Our central location provides a sensible option

for hosting face to face meetings when these are needed and the PDNPA has sufficient meeting rooms and capacity to host such meetings. Likewise, as an Authority with a large head office, we have sufficient space to host any hotdesking should staff from the UK Comms function wish to use the PDNPA as a base or hub at any time. Wherever the new UK Comms function staff are recruited from there will be need for some face to face induction and briefing, which again our central location may be advantageous for.

2. Who will be involved in coordination and delivery of the hosting

We are currently consulting on proposed changes to our organisational structure at the PDNPA, the outcome of which will not be known until the end of July. However, the CEO will have overall responsibility for the hosting of the UK Comms function and will ensure there is coordination between the different service areas involved in enabling the hosting.

Our proposed new structure creates a new Head of Resources into which our HR, Finance and ICT functions will report. The CEO would therefore work closely with the Head of Resources to ensure successful hosting of the UK Comms function. Within our proposed new Resources service there will be a Finance Manager, an Information Manager and a People Team Manager and it will be each of these roles that heads up the specific support functions of finance, ICT and HR that will be involved in the hosting. Under the Information Manager there will be an IT Manager and a Communications Manager. Although the Communications Manager will not be directly involved with the UK Comms function, we believe there will be opportunities for relationships to develop and for learning to be shared across the UK Comms function and the PDNPA.

3. How the HR, finance and ICT support will be structured and evaluated

We will develop SLAs between ourselves and the UK Comms function to cover HR, finance and ICT provision and these agreements would be reviewed annually.

3.1 HR support

For HR support we will assign one of our three HR Advisors to be the lead for the UK Comms function. The HR Advisor will support with the initial recruitment and onboarding of the UK Comms function team and then with their ongoing training and development needs. The HR Advisor would also support in any HR implications that are triggered at the end of the proposed three-year period. Two supplementary documents are attached to this expression setting out our in house HR provision and our total reward benefits for employees.

From the briefing document it appears that the line management of the Communications Director will be via a performance panel of three, which would be the PDNPA CEO and a CEO from a Welsh and Scottish national park. We believe that the PDNPA CEO should be the de facto line manager for day to day issues and HR issues such as leave, sickness, expenses, etc. We also envisage the PDNPA CEO leading on pastoral support and day to day contact with the Communications Director. Broader mentoring and support could come from others on the performance panel or indeed from another national park CEO if that was more appropriate based on geographic location of the Communications Director or personal rapport that may develop with any of the CEOs.

3.2 Finance support

In terms of managing finances, we would treat the UK Comms function like a funded project. The UK Comms function would be contained as a separate department within our finance system with their own budgets. Annual contributions would be collected in advance each year at the start of the

project (assumed October 2023). The project will cross financial years and it is proposed that contributions received but unused at the financial year end (31st March) will be carried forward using an Earmarked Reserve.

We are currently in the process of commissioning a new finance system. The new system is designed to allow more 'self-service' by staff in relation to financial processes but the PDNPA finance team would administer orders, supplier invoices and debtor invoices where necessary as part of their usual operations. The new system will also allow monthly accounts to be produced so the PDNPA Finance Manager would be able to give the UK Comms function accurate and timely financial information to allow the Communications Director to monitor and report on financial progress.

We have significant experience in handling and accounting for separate project income and accounts.

3.3 ICT support

The PDNPA has ICT Support Services available Monday to Friday 09:00 – 16:00. We also have a support ticket system with agreed times for response depending on the priority of the issue as well as having email or phone requests for the IT helpdesk. Phone or email requests are typically dealt with within two hours (during operating hours). Ticket requests are dealt with within one day for low priority or typically in under two hours for normal or high priority issues. Our ticket logging system would be used to report against the SLA we would draw up with the UK Comms function.

Staff in the UK Comms function would be expected to comply with [PDNPA ICT policies](#). Data Security and Protection training would be mandatory for UK Comms function staff. PDNPA can provide access to online training.

The UK Comms function would retain control of their Personal Data and be responsible for compliance obligations under the applicable Data Protection Legislation. If needed, a data protection agreement between PDNPA and the UK Comms function could be developed at a later date.

The UK Comms function would be expected to notify the PDNPA if it became aware of:

- a. any accidental, unauthorised or unlawful processing of the Personal Data
- b. any Personal Data Breach

For the UK Comms function, we would expect to implement our PDNPA standard provision for hardware and software as set out below:

Description	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Hardware			
Laptop – 8Gb Ram, 256 Gb SSD, Min: 10th Gen i3 processor, docking station, Monitor	£685	-	-
Mobile phone – Android. 2Gb monthly data allowance	£240	60	60
Software			
0365 (NationalParks.uk)	£220	£220	£220
Network services			
PDNPA will not provide or have responsibility for internet services but can provide (remote) best effort support	-	-	-
Other ICT Services			
Backup (platform solution total cost NOT per user)	£1000	£1000	£1000
Training (tbc but priced for ELMS)	£12	£12	£12

As yet unidentified cost	Tbc	Tbc	tbc
--------------------------	-----	-----	-----

Estimated costs for three posts	£ 4,471	£ 1,876	£ 1,876
---------------------------------	---------	---------	---------

It is proposed that the PDNPA hosted support provision involves migrating NationalParks.uk to its own MS365 tenant. The included services would be:

- nationalparks.uk email addresses
- nationalparks.uk logon accounts
- Single repository for nationalparks.uk data

4. What will be the costs and budget over three years

In setting an estimated budget it is acknowledged that the income is fixed at £195k per year, therefore to accommodate estimated pay awards (5% has been assumed) overall annual spend has been averaged out across the three-year period to give rise to a surplus in years 1 and 2 to accommodate pay increases in years 2 and 3.

The budget does not allow for any redundancy costs due at the end of the three years. This is estimated to be a minimum of £11k depending on final salaries and any continuous service the individuals have. It is proposed that in the event that redundancy pay is required that this cost is shared between all 15 UK National Parks, National Parks England (NPE) and National Parks Partnership (NPP).

Our proposal is based on there being no existing employees in place. The salary costs have been based on the PDNPA revised pay structure at the top of the relevant grades (1 FTE grade L and 1.60 FTE at grade G) and includes an allowance for pay awards of 5% each year. If the successful candidates start at the bottom or mid-points in the grades (which contain 4 scale points), then there would be an overall reduction in costs of £17.7k. This could be set aside for potential redundancy costs or added to the operating budget with the agreement of NPP and NPE and UK national park CEOs.

The budget includes an allowance for IT and mobile phone equipment and a small amount for training.

The operational costs do not allow for any production of general materials, paid-for social media or upgrades (i.e. website), nor for any freelance specialist that may be required over the three years. However, the small 'other operating costs' may be drawn on for these additional costs.

The travel and subsistence budget has been set aside to allow attendance at networking events and some face to face meetings as may be required as it is felt that this is an important part of the role.

The budget estimate also includes a small annual contribution to the PDNPA's internal support services, this charge is linked to the pay award and therefore is uplifted annually at 5%, if the pay award is lower than this then this would be reflected in the charge. We are only applying one-third of the normal charge we make for projects or roles that we host here. This is in recognition of the fact that the UK Comms function is virtual so some of the actual costs we face when hosting a role are not present in this instance.

Any overall underspends would be carried forward to the following year and agreement would be sought to add this to the operating budget for the next year. Any overall underspends would be returned proportionally to the UK National Parks, NPE and NPP.

Description	Year 1 (£)	Year 2 (£)	Year 3 (£)	Total (£)
Recruitment Costs	4,000	0	0	4,000
Director (Grade L) 1 FTE	76,190	80,000	84,000	240,190
Officer 1 (Grade G) 1 FTE	42,310	44,430	46,650	133,390
Officer 2 (Grade G) 0.6 FTE	25,385	26,655	27,990	80,030
Training	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,000
Travel & Subsistence	5,000	5,000	5,000	15,000
ICT & home working set up costs	2,055	0	0	2,055
Mobile Phone	720	180	180	1,080
Software & Licenses & Backups	1,660	1,660	1,660	4,980
Corporate Overhead	9,080	9,535	10,015	28,630
Social Media Management Platform	450	450	450	1,350
Newsletter Mailing	600	600	600	1,800
Adobe Cloud Package (2 accounts)	700	700	700	2,100
Media Monitoring	4,000	4,000	4,000	12,000
Publications, research and website costs	12,900	12,900	12,900	38,700
Other Operating Costs	5,565	5,565	5,565	16,695
Total Expenditure Budget	191,615	192,675	200,710	585,000
Annual Income	(195,000)	(195,000)	(195,000)	(585,000)
In year (surplus)/ deficit	(3,385)	(2,325)	5,710	0

5. What are the advantages and risks to our Authority

There are very few advantages for the PDNPA in our hosting the UK Comms function, rather there are mainly additional workload implications and risks. However, we are a member of the family of national parks and being relatively longstanding and well resourced, we are keen to step up and demonstrate our leadership commitments by offering to host the UK Comms function for the benefit of all UK national parks.

There may be some performance advantage to the PDNPA for our own communications team if close relationships, support and peer learning take place between our communications team and the UK Comms function team.

There may be some reputational advantage to the PDNPA if our hosting creates a more positive impression of the Authority or raises our profile with government or partners.

There would be a very small financial contribution to our overheads of around £9-10k per year but this would be far less than the real costs to our team from hosting the function.

There are significantly more risks than advantages from our offer to host. These include:

- Financial risks
 - The budget is very tight with very little contingency for any hidden costs

- There may be redundancy costs which we cannot recover
- There could be higher than budgeted staffing costs if people are employed who come with a long local authority continuous service
- The corporate overhead charge is unlikely to cover our costs and this would be even more so should the hosting necessitate significantly more time input from the CEO or any of the leads providing the support services
- Capacity risks
 - The timing is not ideal as the Authority is currently involved in a significant change process which is requiring a lot of HR time
 - Part of the change process involved reducing our back-office provision which includes reducing numbers in the finance and HR teams
 - The finance team are currently involved in procuring a new finance system which is reducing their capacity for other tasks at the moment
- Reputational risks
 - There is a risk as to how it is seen internally with PDNPA staff and with local partners if we are seen to be taking on extra commitments at a time when we are trying to make savings which include making some roles redundant, albeit that UK Comms function roles are funded
- Practical risks
 - There is a concern about how line management of the Communications Director role will work in practice with three people involved in the line managing of the role and a lack of clarity over who the actual line manager will be
 - There are risks that the new UK Comms function will not function or deliver as planned despite careful and detailed thinking through and development of the proposed new system
 - The time scales for recruitment seem very optimistic
 - The PDNPA currently does not have any staff who have a contractual work base as their home location so we will be entering new territory which may raise questions from other staff

Outstanding questions or points requiring clarity

We are making our submission with two major questions outstanding that we are seeking clarity over. The first is the job description for the Communication Director and who/how this will be developed into a final version that can be used for recruitment. The second is that we do not believe the proposed recruitment timescale is at all practical. The proposal would like to see advertising for the Communications Director in mid-June yet it will be 22nd June at the earliest before we know who will be hosting the function and a final JD and PS still need to be agreed. The proposed interview panel for the Communications Director happening in early July is therefore entirely unreasonable and we cannot sign up to delivering that.

In summary, despite questions over any advantage and some significant risks, the PDNPA is happy to host the unit as we see this as part of our responsibility to the wider national park family, given our history and resources. Whatever the costs and risks, we would be proud and honoured to host this unit and play our part in helping make it deliver successfully for all national parks.