

7. **WELCOMING PLACE AIM OVERVIEW (SLF)**

1. **Purpose of the report**

To inform Members about the Authority's progress in responding to the Welcoming Place aim since April 2023 and what this means for the future.

2. **Key Issues**

- The 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) 2018 sets out the framework and vision for what the Government wants to do to improve the environment within a generation. Updated by the [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#) with plans to deliver ten goals. Goal 10 is to enhance beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment. The Government wants everyone to enjoy our landscapes, but also recognises that to restore nature, we need to enjoy its beauty responsibly.
- The [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) was published on the 31 January 2024. It seeks to support Protected Landscapes (PLs) in meeting their huge potential for nature, climate, people and place and to deliver the EIP 2023 goals. PLs are recognised as having a distinctive sense of place and representing the country's' shared heritage and national identity. These special qualities must be protected for everyone to enjoy. The EIP committed to everyone in England living within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space; reducing other barriers that prevent people from accessing green and blue spaces, such as physical challenges, lack of confidence and lack of information. PLs are expected to set the standard for meeting this commitment, leading efforts to increase responsible access and engagement with nature.
- The [Diverse Audience Plan \(DAP\)](#) is aligned with the National Park Management Plan (NPMP) and Authority Plan. Actions include working with more diverse audiences, often smaller charities/community groups who tend to have limited experience with delivering funded projects. Authority support is required and there is an element of risk for the Authority as a delivery partner. Observations show a good representation of Global Majority communities visiting the NP, nonetheless support required for a move to active participation including diversifying volunteers, focus to also consider social economic data to drive activity.
- Whilst the economic benefits to the national park from tourism are acknowledged there is a growing need to better understand the impacts that visitor numbers and patterns may be having on the area's communities, its fragile natural environment and cultural heritage assets. Authority Members started to explore this issue at the April Member Forum and further discussions with officers will take place at the May Forum. Any emerging proposals will need to be discussed with partners.
- The Authority works with its constituent authorities who are responsible for rights of way within the national park. The Authority's role, as its limited resources allow, is to enhance access on priority routes e.g. those promoted, connected to visitor hubs and access for all. Constituent authorities' resources are also limited and this coupled with increasing severe weather events and visitor usage has led to deterioration in rights of way condition.
- Since the April 2023 Programmes and Resources meeting the Authority has undertaken many activities, both on our own and in partnership, that assist in meeting our welcoming place ambitions. These are outlined from paragraph 8 below the majority of which will continue to be delivered and developed through 2024-25 together with additional actions detailed in the Authority Plan 2023-28.

3. Recommendation

1. To note progress in delivering to the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2023-28 and Authority Plan welcoming place aim and targets.

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

4. The activities described in this report contribute to a number of our policies and legal obligations:
5. The [Peak District National Park Management Plan 2023-28](#) Aim Three: [Welcoming Place](#) links closely to: [special qualities](#) 3, 6 and 7 and by developing a connection with the place visitors will benefit from all 7 [special qualities](#) which in turn will lead to support and understanding of the natural environment. Aim Three_actions_ will also contribute to Aim One [Climate Change](#), Aim Two [Landscape and Nature Recovery](#), and Aim Four [Thriving Communities](#) including many of the objectives with their targets and headline delivery of the NPMP particularly for Aim Three.
6. The Authority Plan 2023–28 Enabling delivery Aim: The Authority is inspiring, pioneering and enabling in delivering the National Park vision; Objective B (Access): To achieve timescales and follow processes for the statutory functions under Countryside and Rights of Way Act and Town and Country Planning Act.

Background Information

7. One of the four 20 year aims for the NPMP is focussed on developing the national park as a place where ‘all are welcomed and inspired to care for and connect to its special qualities.’ The five-year objectives that underpin this aim, and prioritise delivery over the plan period, are Objectives 7, 8 and 9 please see [Welcoming Place](#)

Proposals

8. As reported to this Committee in April 2023 the Authority is already undertaking many activities, both on our own and in partnership, that assist in delivering our welcoming place ambitions. The summary below updates Members on the activities we have focussed our resources on since April 2023 and look to continue and develop:
 - Map priority routes (including White Peak Loop) 2023-24 – priority routes within the national park have been identified and resources are now being sought to address issues. Plans for the White peak loop are ongoing.
 - Promote existing and new routes – a project to improve accessibility has been delivered at Castleton details of which can be seen at [Accessible Castleton](#).
 - A template/toolkit for area action plans is being developed through the development of plan for the Dovedale area. It will incorporate and develop from work identified in the Active Travel England project funded by the Department of Transport (£100,000) which will look at active travel away from private vehicles.
 - The identification of key areas/recreation hubs to work with during 2023-24 has been delayed due to changing to Dovedale for the area action plan. Learnings will then inform the identification of key areas to work with.
 - The Authority has continued to support the Environmental Quality Mark (EQM) Community Interest Company to deliver the Peak District EQM. A further 10 Peak District businesses have achieved the award (7 within the national park).
 - #PeakDistrictProud has lost traction and the visitor environment has also changed

since the inception of the scheme in 2019/20 and some partners are querying whether it is still the right approach. The need to review both the baseline evidence of responsible visiting, any impacts of visitors on nature and the scheme during 2024-25 has been identified.

- No new business or community groups have been supported to share #PeakDistrictProud messages during 2023-24. Future activity is likely to be dependent on the outcomes of the 'review' of #PeakDistrictProud and the outcomes of the strategic tourism discussions.
- A social listening pilot commenced in 2023 and concludes in July 2024. Pilot findings will inform workshops looking at revising #PeakDistrictProud, collaboration with tourism business and any new local toolkit. Opportunities for communities and visitor businesses to support the national park through advocacy, volunteering and financial support will also be provided.
- Over 52,000 hours of Volunteering delivered across the Authority: Volunteer Rangers contributing 17, 724hrs; Peak Park Conservation Volunteers (PPCV) delivering 18,900hrs, working with 306 groups including United Utilities, Staffordshire County Council; tree planting schemes (11,000 trees); engagement with diverse audience groups e.g. Rotherham Opportunity College, Fit for Work. New leaders trained and a new Ranger Trainee to join through the Training Academy in 2024/25 will support this thriving activity.
- Other Authority grant support includes: Community grants (reported in the Thriving Communities update report); Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) grants (already summarised in the landscape and nature recovery aim update report).
- The Authority has supported the Youth Hostel Association to develop the next steps of the Access Unlimited coalition, now includes partners National Landscapes. Defra funding in region of 4.5 million secured for project delivery 24/25.
- Ambassador Centres are a positive model for working co-operatively and creating networks to share skills and knowledge across the national park. Many young people now have a deeper connection to the landscape they are visiting, alongside the opportunities offered at the different outdoor activity centres. Two new centres have joined the scheme making a total of 9 centres, reaching an estimated 12,500 young people in 2023-24. These centres continue to participate in the Peak District Educators Group through which, two skills share sessions have taken place and connections made with FiPL funded farm educational access projects.
- Six new Ambassador schools have been recruited making a total of 19 supported schools, reaching 5,930 young people, of which 1,460 took part in Authority led activities. Targeted through DAP action plans: 10 schools are within the most deprived decile, 11 have over 30% free school meals and 5 are within the national park. Peak District Foundation funding has provided capacity to recruit and train volunteers, develop online resources and maintain a meaningful connection.
- The school visit programme 2023/24 was fully booked, engaging 8632 young people and exceeding the income target. This evidences the sound reputation, as do the young people's words *"This is seriously the best day ever!"* Schools have continued to be targeted in line with DAP, data has been analysed to identify future trends and interventions. Please see Appendix 1 Schools case study.
- The Junior Rangers programme continues to provide an ongoing connection to the

national park for many young people.

- The Youth co-creation programme funded by AMEX through National Parks Partnership has delivered two youth co-creation workshops with local high schools, working with over 40 young people from Lady Manners and Buxton Community School. Resources around wellbeing in the outdoors and green careers have been developed. The wellbeing workshop produced “Nature Boost” a school resource available on the Authority’s website and on paper. Together with regular PPCV Green Leaders skills days, this programme is part of our youth volunteering journey, please see Appendix 2 Young People’s Volunteering Pathway.
- The creation of progressive pathway for youth volunteering giving a platform to Youth Voice has been researched including consultation with other National Parks and Peak District community youth groups. This work is shaping PDNP Youth Voice. Through the Junior Rangers and Green Leaders new volunteer opportunities for ages 12-25 are being created. It is hoped that the new Trainees as part of the Trainee Academy can help drive this forward in 2024/25.
- The second delivery phase of the National Heritage Lottery Fund bid for Championing National Parks for Everyone was submitted in July 2023 in partnership with Peak District Mosaic, YDNP and NYMNP. This application was successful and the delivery phase has now commenced with recruitment for the Project Manager and Project Officer posts planned for April/May 2024.
- Examples of community group support include: Dal Kular Black Writer in Residence, please see [Peak District Residencing – Black Nature in Residence](#);
- The Miles Without Stiles webpages have had 1.2 million views. Last year, there were 234,000 views, 9% of all Authority web traffic. A second handbook print run has been needed with all proceeds going into the Access Fund.
- A new changing places toilet facility has been built at Millers Dale car park.
- Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Prevent: Sensory Trails developed linked to Miles without Stiles; webpage signposting to health professionals and community groups; networking through range of organisations and strong relationships made with local social prescribing teams, Nature Prescriptions focus group update at Appendix 3.
- HWB Restore: New projects High Peak Health walks, Nature Natters and Forget me Nots walks.
- HWB Excel: Promotion and support of Nature Prescription work to two other National Parks; 30 health professionals attended Nature Prescription training; Authority and Derbyshire Dales District Council volunteers trained in Mindfulness and Nature Connection; first HWB Network meeting held.
- The Authority Plan 2023-28 enabling delivery aim sets out actions that will assist in the delivery of the Authority’s essential business. Objective B (Access): To achieve timescales and follow processes for the statutory functions under Countryside and Rights of Way Act and Town and Country Planning Act includes the following essential business actions:
 - Supporting the statutory functions of the Local Access Forum so that it continues to offer a good overview of access and accessibility issues within the national park. A reduction in the number of meetings each year from 4 to 3 has been agreed with partners for a more efficient approach.
 - Identify, enhance and maintain access to Access Land and ensure the public

has the greatest possible access to rights of way. An app has been designed and is used by rangers to record the state of all access points to open access land (Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act). Please see Appendix 4.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

Financial:

9. Activities in the early years of the NPMP and the Authority Plan 2023-28 have funding and resources identified to deliver them. Resources for future year activities will need to be identified during the delivery period. Increasingly the Authority seeks external funding to help deliver desired actions however, not all funders cover corporate overheads or project management costs. So, any net cost to the Authority will need to be judged against overall project benefits on a case by case basis.

Risk Management:

10. The main risk of the Authority being unable to deliver to the welcoming place aim is the resource challenge of both partners and the Authority. However, this risk is mitigated by focussing on the three priorities that the objectives outline. There is also a potential risk of working more with diverse audience small charities and community groups, many of whom have limited experience with delivering funded projects of scale.

Sustainability:

11. No issues to raise.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

12. The delivery of the Welcoming Place aim through the DAP work speaks directly to the ambition of ensuring equity of access (physical and intellectual) to the national park, areas of most unequal access and gaps in provision. The DAP sets out a clear plan to address these inequalities and ways to evaluate and report this work.

13. Climate Change

Climate change and its impacts feature in all engagement programmes. A connection to the place is encouraged as research shows this leads to positive pro-environmental behaviours. Engagement programmes highlight examples of good practice and encourage personal responsibility to take positive action. This work focuses on reaching out and engaging with communities that do not traditionally work with the Authority; to deepen the knowledge and understanding of those that do in order to encourage connection to the place and responsible pro-environmental behaviours, including sustainable transport use.

14. Background papers (not previously published)

None.

15. Appendices

Appendix 1 - School Visits Case Study
Appendix 2 - Young People's Volunteering Pathway
Appendix 3 - Nature Prescriptions 2024 Update
Appendix 4 - Access Point Monitoring Summary

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

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