

## **7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT (PM)**

### **1. Purpose of the report**

To up-date members of key items since the previous Authority meeting

### **2. Recommendation:**

#### **1. For Members to note the report**

### **3. Key Items**

#### National and regional issues

The Campaign for National Parks (CNP) launched their health check on English and Welsh National Parks. Some of the media coverage of the report criticised National Park Authorities for the state of nature in National Parks, however the report itself recognised the limited powers and lack of funding that Authorities face. Good media coverage was achieved on the issue, alongside reporting at around the same time on the continuing insufficient government funding for English National Parks.

Having met all the significant Mayoral candidates for the new East Midlands Combined Authority in the run up to the election, efforts are now continuing to engage the new Mayor and Officers. The new Mayor will be invited to visit the National Park and find out more about our work. We are currently exploring the best ways for the Authority to input into the new governance structures of the Combined Authority.

There has been little further development from government on the publication of new guidance on National Park Management Plans or the new duty to further our purposes. Input is being given to government on both matters via National Parks England (NPE).

There has been a significant national planning 'win' for National Parks as the government has announced the outcome of a recent consultation on extending permitted development rights. The result is that new permitted development rights to allow the conversion of farm buildings into new housing (up to ten per farm) will now not apply within National Parks. Good coordinated responses from our planning colleagues across English National Parks helped achieve this important result.

CEOs from National Parks England recently met in the North York Moors to discuss various matters, including the redistribution of lead roles to Chief Officers. With some recent or planned changes in CEOs it was opportune to review which CEOs lead on key areas. As a result, I will shortly be taking on the climate change lead for NPE from Richard Leafe (Lake District National Park) and taking over the lead role in supporting the Officer groups for Transport and Historic Environment.

At the time of writing this report, we are currently hosting a face to face gathering of the communications leads across UK National Parks. This is the first time the group has met face to face in five years. With the newly formed UK National Parks Comms Unit, which we host, it has been a good opportunity to bring people together for agreeing a shared work plan, develop the branding and offer peer support, particularly as there are some who are new to the role.

Members will have seen the April MP and Leaders newsletter that has recently been sent out. Engagement with local MPs has not been significant in the last couple of months, partly due to an election period. Engagement is expected to pick up again over the next few months.

#### Headlines across the National Park Management Plan

We recently held our first annual Leaders Group meeting for the NPMP. It was well attended by local authority leaders, water companies, NGOs and others. Participants found the event very informative and they have requested we hold these events every six months rather than annually.

### **Climate Change**

Nothing specific to report in this area.

### **Nature Recovery**

Morrige Hill Country Landscape Recovery project has now been formally approved and enrolled with contracts signed for over £750k. We are currently recruiting for the project team. The project will give us opportunities for landscape recovery supported by private as well as public funding.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) scheme has been awarded an extra £2m nationally to be spent on access projects before the end of the year. We will be putting in significant bids for up to four such projects. Our FiPL team are working flat out to get grants approved and distributed so that projects can be completed by the end of the programme period. We have already allocated over £2m of funding for this year. It is not yet clear what the plans are for after the end of the financial year but it is hoped that the programme, or at least aspects of it, will continue in some form. We are hosting a Defra FiPL workshop and site visits in the coming weeks.

The Authority has just issued new grazing licences for tenants at Warslow and the farmhouse at Pump Farm is now rebranded – a great job has been done and we now await to start work on the agricultural buildings behind the farm house – this was one of the site visits on the annual Member's tour last year.

I recently went on a visit organised by the Peak District Moorland Association to a dawn walk on Hurst and Chunal moor. It was an excellent opportunity to meet a wide range of stakeholders and discuss moorland management. There were a good number of lapwing, curlew, stonechats and a number of other birds that I couldn't possibly identify. I complemented this visit with one to Warslow estate with our own Tim Robinson who helps manage our land for conservation outcomes. It was very interesting to see the similarities and differences between management where there are driven grouse shoots and where there are not.

Along with our Chair, and a number of ex-employees such as John Arnett and George Wolf, I recently attended the centenary celebration of CPRE Peak District and South Yorkshire, also known as Friends of the Peak District. Dame Fiona Reynolds spoke, as did Sheffield poet and writer Helen Mort, who has just published a biography of Ethel Haythornthwait, who founded the branch 100 years ago. It was an inspiring event that reminded everyone how important and fragile much of the Peak District is and how vulnerable it is to harmful change, but for organisations such as CPRE and the National Park Authority.

Wild fire risk remains one of the singularly most significant factors that could potentially damage or set back nature recovery. Despite the wettest winter on record, risks still remain and the Authority recently convened a meeting of the Fire Operations Group, led by Andy Farmer, which brings together a number of fire and rescue services along with major landholders and managers. The recent warmer weather we are seeing is bringing with it increased fire risks. There are reports of multiple fires being set every night, mainly by roadside or wild campers. Our ranger teams and partners are doing a difficult job in trying to engage with those who have often travelled a significant way to visit the National Park and who have been expecting to have a fire as part of their visit. Currently we are working in partnership with United Utilities to employ some seasonal fire

wardens/rangers, which we hope will make a difference in key areas.

### **Welcoming Place**

It is the start of the well dressing season and I was honoured to attend the Tissington Well Dressing service last week. It was wonderful to see the floral creations dressing each well and to see the huge number of visitors enjoying time in a stunning setting, learning more about this unique aspect of cultural heritage in the National Park.

Another important celebration recently took place to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Ranger service. The event took place in Edale and saw many past and present staff and volunteer rangers gathered together. The professionalism and commitment of our volunteer rangers is very impressive and I see first-hand, when I meet them out and about in the National Park, just what a difference they make in welcoming and helping visitors.

The consultants reviewing our Visitor and Cycle Hire Centres are finalising their report which will be presented to us in the next few weeks. Members will hear more about the draft ideas at the Forum in May.

The issues of tourism pressure, transport and sustainability are ones that the Authority is actively discussing and will be the subject of further debate at the May Forum.

I'm very pleased to report that the new Changing Places toilet facility has been completed at Miller's Dale. The funding for this came from a variety of sources and required our Assets and Enterprise team to work hard to ensure the project was delivered within tight timescales. The team are now looking at whether a further Changing Places toilet can be developed at another one of our visitor sites.

Work is due to begin in the summer (lower water levels) on replacing Cressbrook Bridge after all the necessary consents and funding have been secured. This was a great team effort across the Authority, Foundation and local community.

### **Thriving Communities**

The CEO Roadshows are continuing with a recent event in Hathersage and upcoming event in Bakewell. Many thanks to Bill Hanley for attending in Hathersage and I know some Members are keen to attend in Bakewell. The events are proving very useful for getting a better understanding of what people on the ground feel our priorities should be and for giving feedback on how they feel we are performing in our duties. The events are also a chance to inform residents that a lot of the matters they are concerned about are not actually the responsibility of the Authority.

In the Planning team we now have our enforcement backlog reduced to figures that are at the same level as 2017 and for every quarter in the last two years our development management performance is now running at over 70% of applications being determined within the required timescales. Thanks to successful staff recruitment and retention we have also just been able to restart our pre-applications service.

### **Resource issues**

The finance team are busy working on end of year outturns and reporting. It has been a tricky year to report on as we both changed finance systems during the year and changed Finance Managers. However, at this early stage it is looking like the Authority has comfortably met its financial targets. It is likely that there will be a modest surplus due to some staff vacancies during last year. The situation with recruitment is improving so going forward we would not expect to have so many vacancies and thus our expenditure would be expected to be closer to budget.

### Staffing update

Since the last CEO report Emily Fox has taken up her new role as Head of Resources, Sinead Butler has started as Finance Manager and Angela Edwards has started as the Authority Solicitor. Several other new members of staff have joined the Authority, including a number in Planning and more trainees as part of the National Park Training Academy.

### Recent external meetings

Since my last report I have continued to meet with stakeholders, partners and organisations based in and around the National Park Authority. A number of such meetings have been covered above but they also include:

- Toby Perkins MP, Shadow Minister for Rural Affairs – site visit to the PDNPA
- Jo Dilley, MD – Visit Peak District & Derbyshire
- Patrick Flaherty, CEO & Cllr Alan White, Chair of Staffs County Council
- Audience with East Midlands Combined Authority Mayoral Candidates
- East Midlands Combined County Authority: Launch event.
- Homes England Meeting with Paul Wilson, CEO DDDC and Christine Seaton (Senior Manager Affordable Housing Growth)
- CEO Roadshow, Hartington
- Interviews with BBC (*Good Morning & East Midlands Today*)
- Fire Operations Group Meeting with external bodies
- Barry Cummins, East Midlands Combined County Authority, Programme Lead for Land and Housing
- Chris Henning Executive Director, Place Derbyshire County Council
- C. Supt. Dave Kirby, Divisional Commander, North Division
- Mark Rogers, CEO East Midlands Combined Mayoral Authority
- CEO Roadshow in Hathersage
- CPRE Peak District & South Yorkshire Centenary Celebration

### **Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date**

Phil Mulligan, CEO, with input from Victoria Peel, Executive Support Officer  
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