

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

Due to the pre-election period there has been relatively little from Government since the last CEO report. We are still awaiting guidance on the new duty to further the purposes of National Parks.

I was due to attend a Ministerial Roundtable hosted by the Campaign for National Parks (CNP) to discuss nature recovery but government attendance at the meeting was not possible. The meeting did still go ahead with a range of environmental organisations. There were calls for a big bold vision for the future and collaborative leadership to achieve this. We need Defra to be seen as one of the big offices of state as its responsibilities are vital for the future of the nation. It was recognised that there will be significant early opportunities for any new government such as COP16 (Biodiversity) in October and the 75th anniversary of the legislation that created National Parks in December. Perhaps the latter may be an opportunity to reassess the core purposes of National Parks, which were founded at a time when there was not the concern over climate or nature.

Our communications team has prepared initial letters ready to be sent to all our newly elected MPs, some of whom may be taking on the role for the first time. We will use a similar briefing pack to that which we prepared for the candidates in the new East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) and we will offer visits and meetings with all successful candidates.

Myself and the Chair have now met with Claire Ward, the new EMCCA Mayor. Claire is keen on a 'visit East Midlands' campaign with better promotion of all there is to offer in the region. This could help dissipate visitors to the National Park to other areas of the region although it is recognised the vast majority of our visitors are already from the region. Claire is also setting up a Nature and Biodiversity Taskforce, which we have strongly suggested should include representatives from the Authority.

Headlines across the National Park Management Plan

The recent Delivery Group meeting of partners in the NPMP had to be postponed due to limited attendees. This is currently being re-scheduled.

Climate Change

Climate Change Member training has recently taken place as well as a specially convened workshop with Sheffield University entitled Conservation in a changing climate: considering new approaches for the Peak District. The workshop set out to examine what the focus of our conservation efforts should be, given the prediction that by 2050 the weather in the Peak District will be similar to southern France. How do we need to adapt our landscapes and what adaptive release do we need to accept (what do we let go of)?

All UK National Parks have signed up to Race to Zero, a United Nations initiative. We are the first National Park in the world to do so. There is a commitment to measure and

reduce carbon, which whilst being challenging and somewhat contested, does give the National Park movement a clear direction of travel and aspiration. The launch of Race to Zero had been delayed due to the pre-election period but is now due to go ahead on 25th July. We expect some Peak District case studies on this to be picked up by local comms channels.

Nature Recovery

A programme manager has now been appointed for the Morridge Hill Country Landscape Recovery project and other staff appointments are underway. The project will give us opportunities for landscape recovery supported by private as well as public funding.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) scheme is coming to an end. We have allocated almost all the remaining funding we have. There have been extensions offered by Defra for the admin staff and further extensions for the FiPL advisors, who's role will change to help more farmers enter existing environmental schemes. We recently hosted a national FiPL workshop where colleagues from ten protected landscapes came together with the Defra FiPL team. Excellent field visits took place to see a range of projects that we have funded locally through this programme.

Work is underway at Pump Farm on the new agricultural buildings which need to be in place before a longer term tenancy is agreed on the house and land. New tenants are also being assessed for Knowle House Farm, which Members visited on the annual tour last year.

We recently hosted a study visit of ecology colleagues from across UK National Parks and currently our senior nature team is in the New Forest for a meeting of the English National Parks Agriculture and Rural Development Group where we will be presenting an update on our Defra funded test and trial for landscape recovery.

The Authority coordinates a Fire Operations Group to help prevent and address wildfires. We recently hosted a training exercise on Stanage Edge which involved full scale deployment of resources for a mock wildfire incident. It was incredibly valuable to practice this and for some of our newer Rangers and team members to get experience of using kit in the field and coordinating with other partners in a pressurised scenario.

Following on from my recent visits to moorland estates managed in private ownership, I have just spent an afternoon on the Eastern Moors, which are largely owned by the Authority but are managed through a partnership with the National Trust and RSPB. Almost 15 years into the partnership and real change across the landscape can be seen. The aim is to achieve diversity: within the species we have; of species; and across different types of habitat. The site as gone down from 7,000 sheep grazing to 2,000 and now to none. Careful grazing management is now achieved through tenant cows and a herd of red deer. The moors now consist of a range of habitats including some rare wet-woodland. One of the main management challenges for the partnership is visitor pressure with over 300 incidents of camping with fires dealt with every year. The pressures on and use of the landscape get to the heart of key questions for us as a National Park Authority – what should be the priorities for how land is used?

Welcoming Place

It has been a delight to get to know the Ilam and Dovedale area better recently. I attended the opening of a new National Trust accessible path around Ilam Hall, which the Authority partly funded. There are plans for a second phase of accessibility work at this very popular site. I also stayed over at the Ilam youth hostel with the YHA CEO and enjoyed an early run around Thorpe Cloud with him the next morning. Negotiations are progressing with the National Trust around the provision of toilets at Dovedale and wider site developments.

The Miller's Dale change place is now open and we are currently installing a temporary bike hire operation in the Goods Shed which will also provide accessible cycle hire options. Across all our visitor centres and cycle hire operations a new till system is currently being installed which will link directly to our finance system. The consultants who have been looking at options for visitor centres and cycle hire have just submitted their findings and recommendations. We are working through these and will shortly come back to Members to agree how we proceed.

The roll out of pay and display charges at 13 of the Authority's car parks has been implemented and successfully operating throughout the year. Progress is also being made with the implementation of the new tariff structure with DEFRA having initially approved our draft new bylaws and the required public consultation drawing to a close. Asset Management are now moving on to look at further opportunities for more car parks or increasing the size of existing areas either seasonally or permanently. We are also monitoring the impact of the new charges on parking behaviours. This is focused on displacement on to verges with initial indications being that the impact is minimal and in some cases, particularly at North Lees where we have more of a presence, verge parking seems to have decreased. This is likely down to the additional efforts we have put into engaging with visitors around this issue on these sites.

Members recently visited North Lees campsite on the annual tour and will have heard about plans for future development. Currently we are looking to install four new campervan berths at the campsite.

There is a strong programme of school visits, wellbeing events and Ranger guided walks taking place with good levels of attendance. I am currently reviewing a proposal to establish a Youth Voice programme, as previously mentioned at Authority meetings. This will give Members far greater connection to the perspectives and views of younger people who live or work in the National Park.

Following several discussions with Members on issues to do with tourism and visitor pressure, a 'user pressure' group is being established to determine what extra data and research we need to inform our position on managing the pressures that come from all different types of National Park users.

We continue to welcome a wide range of volunteers to work with us from our regular volunteer Rangers, to our younger Green Leaders and our gateway practical volunteering programme PPCV. We also now have Defra funding for phase two of Generation Green – giving young people the experience of an overnight stay in the National Park. The NLHF funded Championing National Parks for Everyone project is also underway with staff being recruited at both the Authority and Mosaic, who will deliver this programme of training community members to bring more people into the National Park.

Another new initiative is the hiring (with funding from United Utilities) of two Wildfire Engagement Officers. These are roles that will engage with the public coming into the National Park around the risks of wildfires, especially from wild camping and associated bonfires and barbeques.

Thriving Communities

Since my last update we have held the Bakewell Meet the CEO Roadshow which was well attended and helped me understand important local issues. Thanks to James Beresford for attending. Dates and venues for the next round of Roadshows are currently being set. I also attended Saddleworth Parish Council for a briefing and was impressed by the efforts they have put into producing a neighbourhood plan, with great

support from our own community planning team. I am continuing to meet residents from Cressbrook Dale to hear their views on unauthorised developments in the local area and to assure them of all the Authority is doing to address these.

I'm pleased that the planning team have now gone live with our new online reporting form for anyone who believes there are planning breaches. This new form will save a lot of staff time and enable us to keep those reporting potential incidents up to date with progress. The team is making good progress with clearing our enforcement backlog and the integration of enforcement officers into the area teams appears to be a helpful new way of working. The latest planning performance figures are also very good with nearly 90% of planning cases being determined within the prescribed time period (government target is 70%).

Aldern House now has some co-working space in the old CEO office that our assets team has done a terrific job in refurbishing. This should provide a flexible and useful space for local businesses and community groups to come in and use.

Resource issues

There is no further update from my last report on the year end position. We are yet to finalise numbers but we are comfortable that we will have hit our overall budget target.

Staffing update

Recruitment remains positive with a number of new appointments being made. The National Park Training Academy now has eight confirmed trainees with the potential for another four in the pipeline. This is an amazing result given the Training Academy was only created earlier this year. The programme of mentor support, peer learning and site visits for the trainees is currently being developed.

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:

- Tissington Well Dressings, Sir Richard Fitzherbert
- James Blake, CEO of Youth Hostel Association
- Fire Operations Group training exercise at Stanage Edge
- Mam Tor Visit with National Trust general managers from across England and Wales
- Campaign for National Parks round table discussion on nature recovery
- Stephen Vickers, CEO Chatsworth (Devonshire Group)
- UK National Park CEO & Chairs Forum at Lock Lomond
- Jo Dilley, MD of Visit Peak District & Derbyshire
- Alistair Kirkbride (Low Carbon Destinations) re sustainable travel
- Gemma Howarth, Area Manager of RSPB
- EMCCA Mayor, Claire Ward
- Kate Josephs, CEO Sheffield City Council
- Ranger Water Company Partnerships

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Phil Mulligan, CEO, with input from Victoria Peel, Executive Support Officer
26th July 2024