

## **8. THRIVING COMMUNITIES THEME UPDATE**

### **1. Purpose**

To inform Members about the Authority's progress since April 2024 with respect to the Aims and Objectives of the National Park Management Plan in relation to Thriving Communities, and what this means for the future.

### **2. Context**

The 26 July 2024 Authority meeting agreed the Programmes and Resources themes would continue to align with the National Park Management Plan (NPMP) 2023-28 aims (minute reference 65/22). This paper continues this programme of reporting against the NPMP aims with a focus on Thriving Communities. The NPMP objectives relevant to this Aim are as follows:

OBJECTIVE 10: TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES BY IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND CONNECTION TO SERVICES;

OBJECTIVE 11: TO PROMOTE A FLOURISHING ECONOMY IN ACCORD WITH NATURE RECOVERY AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

In pursuing the statutory purposes defined for National Parks in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, (amended by 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.

The key tool available to the Authority is the adoption of core policies in its Local Plan which can drive appropriate and sometimes 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).

Beyond its planning function the Authority must work closely with partner organisations through the National Park Management Plan to bring about a more sustainable living and working environment for local people and businesses.

### **3. Progress Since April 2024**

#### **3.1 Affordable Housing Delivery**

3.1.1 Officers and members from Derbyshire Dales District Council and the National Park Authority met twice during the period engaging on the concurrent review of Local Plans across the area and building understanding of the challenges faced with calculating housing need, establishing a basis for a housing target in the Dales and considering an appropriate planning strategy for the National Park that responds to known issues (e.g. housing affordability and adverse population and demographic changes).

3.1.2 However, during the period, changes to the standard housing need methodology, along with changes to national planning policy have been consulted upon and recently published, resulting in housing need figures doubling in the Derbyshire Dales, with further significant increases in the High Peak area. This could lead to increased political pressure for development in the National Park.

3.1.3 Officers across the authorities met prior to Christmas to discuss and consider these impacts with both authorities agreeing to undertake further work and prepare an update for discussion with the Joint member group at the end of January.

3.1.4 Close attention is also being paid to a number of key sites to enable further delivery of affordable homes:

3.1.4.1 **Hartington Creamery** – this site is now largely built out but the 4 affordable homes earmarked have not been taken on by a Registered Provider as originally hoped. They can still be released as “more affordable” homes for private ownership but officers have had to challenge the developer to ensure an affordable value is established allowing the homes to be more accessible to local people.

3.1.4.2 **Tideswell** – in 2021 officers were confident a scheme of 20+ affordable (RSL managed) homes were due to be reported to committee with a positive recommendation. However new rules on nutrient neutrality meant that the scheme could not progress. Officers have subsequently been working to find a means of mitigating the impact of nutrients from the scheme (arising from waste water). It is hoped a scheme of off-site mitigation may offer a solution to off-set the harm and allow the scheme to be resurrected.

3.1.4.3 **Bakewell** – a new scheme 40+ RSL homes is currently under development. Officers have been approached by the developer to renegotiate the Section 106 agreement to allow a more flexibility and allow a more standard “mortgagee in possession” clause to be included which would allow the homes to be sold on the open market should they not be occupied by local people in housing need. This is viewed as a risk to adopted policies which are exceptional by nature and only permitted in order to address local affordability problems. Negotiations are ongoing.

### 3.2 Sustainable Travel

3.2.1 Two key strands of work have progressed over the period. Firstly, a draft version of our Sustainable Travel Framework has been produced. Measures include the call for enhancement of local public transport services. However, owing to current strain on the Authority budget the difficult decision has been taken to end the contract of our sustainable travel project officer. This will inevitably make our ability to influence transport providers more difficult.

3.2.2 Nevertheless, officers will continue to engage in local partnerships as far as possible. More significantly we will soon undertake consultation on a new Active Travel Plan for the National Park. This aims to enhance local rights of way (improving links both within and to the National Park), such as through the promotion of an extended White Peak Loop.

### 3.3 Digital Roll out

3.3.1 During the period officers made connections with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and Staffordshire County Council officers to discuss the roll out of 5G technology in one of the more remote districts of the National Park, but with a large number of villages and rural businesses.

### 3.4 Local Plan Review

3.4.1 The first statutory stage of plan preparation began during the period with a formal consultation event into Issues and Options for policy. An 8-week period closed at the end of November. A total of 178 people attended the consultation events across 10 of our villages. In terms of responses, we have had 226 responders who left a total of 2743 individual comments. The Policy and Communities Team are currently processing the responses and aim to feedback to the Member Local Plan steering group early in the new year.

### 3.5 Community Support

**3.5.1 Neighbourhood plans.** For information plans at regulation 14 stage require a period of consultation prior to being submitted to the local planning authority (LPA) to check its suitability for examination. Regulation 15 follows this consultation and triggers the process of submitting the plan to the LPA. At this point a set of basic conditions are assessed by the LPA to consider whether the plan can then progress to examination.

3.5.1.1 **Saddleworth:** Currently at Regulation 14/15. Officers are working with Oldham Council. The community aim to submit their plan in early 2025 at Reg 15.

3.5.1.2 **Hartington Town Quarter Parish:** Regulation 15 submission draft will go before January Planning Committee. Officers have checked all the submission documents and indications look positive for the plan to progress.

3.5.1.3 **Great Longstone:** In December the community agreed to move forward with a Neighbourhood Plan for the Longstone Area. It is possible they will join with Hassop, Little Longstone and Rowland. At this stage they are advertising in the January edition of the community newsletter (Under the Edge) calling for volunteers to join a project steering committee.

3.5.1.4 **Rowland:** Are considering preparing either a village or Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish separately to Longstone. Officers are attending a parish meeting in January to discuss further.

3.5.1.5 **Tideswell:** Have also been in contact as they asked for guidance on creating a Neighbourhood plan. They are to discuss at next parish meeting.

### 3.5.2 Grants

3.5.2.1 So far this year we've spent £3755 from the community grants pot on the following projects:

3.5.2.2 Grindleford Playing Fields - £750

3.5.2.3 Youlgrave Planting Scheme - £555

3.5.2.4 Litton Tree Survey - £750

3.5.2.5 Cressbrook ecology survey - £750

3.5.2.6 Bakewell Day of Dance - £200

3.5.2.7 Taddington Well – £750

3.5.2.8 Officers are confident the remainder of the annual budget of £5,000 will be spent by year end.

3.5.2.9 The Community Policy Planner is also due to start discussions with the Rangers, and with the Foundation, to see where the roles might overlap and we can work together on more projects/ have more presence in the National Park.

### 3.5.3 Parishes day

3.5.3.1 Working closely with the Peak Park Parishes Forum (PPPF) around 25 parishes attended for the annual Parishes Day event on the 12<sup>th</sup> October. The theme of the day was the Local Plan review and workshops were led through thoughtful discussions on settlements, housing and climate change policy as key areas in advance of the formal consultation event. Parishes were encouraged to engage in the process and attend the upcoming village events. Feedback was positive with many stating obvious improvements in the Planning Service as a whole. Note feedback summary at Appendix 1. It is hoped that more Parishes will look to attend in future and officers will discuss tactics directly with the PPPF.

### 3.5.4 Parishes Planning Training

3.5.4.1 Following the successful Parishes Day event the PPPF have asked if the Authority would be able to offer planning training to Parish Councils. Officers have agreed and an event took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> January at Aldern House. Some 40 parishes attended and officers covered the principles of policy, material considerations, forming strong responses and understanding the impact of recent changes to national policy as well as providing a general opportunity for questions and to raise any concerns experienced. Parishes signed up included: Alstonefield, Bamford, Baslow, Bradwell, Calver, Castleton, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Chelmorton, Curbar, Edale, Fawfieldhead, Gt Longstone, Hathersage, Holme Valley, Litton, Middleton by Youlgrave, Stanton in Peak, Tintwistle, Tissington. As such a good spread of communities across the Derbyshire Dales, High Peak, Staffordshire Moorlands and Kirklees were represented. For reference a map of National Park parishes and their associated council areas is included at Appendix 4.

### 3.6 Economy

3.6.1 The **Shared Prosperity Fund** continues to be rolled out across all the rural districts. We have encouraged each area to produce a map of grant roll out to highlight the spread of allocations and demonstrate the benefit coming to National Park communities and businesses (Appendix 2 and 3). We are hoping to achieve the same outcome for the Staffordshire Moorlands and High Peak areas.

3.6.2 **Business Peak District** also continues to grow with support from the East Midlands Chamber. Recent activities included an annual conference held at the Palace Hotel in Buxton and a successful networking event held in the Board Room at Aldern House. Closer contact with BPD partners has enabled better engagement in our policy development with specific response made to the Local Plan Issues and Options. The Authority has also signed up to a refreshed concordat setting out shared priorities going forward. Officers continue to stress the need for business to work with and respect the special qualities of the area and to highlight the need for high environmental standards in striving for growth and sustainable business.

## 4. Recommendations

1. *To note the progress report for the National Park Management Plan Thriving Communities Theme.*

## 5. Corporate Implications

### a. Legal.

Pursuant to sections 5 and 11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the Authority must deliver to the statutory purposes and statutory duty, respectively, when carrying out its work. Monitoring the Authority's progress against the aims and objectives set out in the National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan will enable appropriate scrutiny and safeguard legal compliance. With regard to affordable housing delivery, the Authority's Legal Team are closely engaged in these discussions and provide advice e.g. with regard to the construction and scope of legal agreements and pursuing appropriate valuations of affordable homes.

- b. **Financial.** Authority support to this aim is supported by core budget. Specifically, within the Policy and Communities Team, Development and Enforcement Teams, Cultural Heritage Team and Minerals and Strategic Planning Teams. There is also a small grant pot held by the Policy and Communities Team. The Local Plan process

requires the preparation of new evidence and this is provided by a specific Local Plan reserve. Officers also frequently discuss the potential for shared evidence commissions to be prepared with neighbouring planning authorities.

- c. **National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan.** The actions set out in this report directly contribute to the NPMP Aims and our own Authority Plan.
- d. **Risk Management.** Currently there are no high-level risks emerging from this key Aim. Officers will monitor potential pressures arising from the recent changes to housing needs calculations, and will use the joint housing group to share evidence and seek to agree a way forward for our respective Local Plan reviews.
- e. **Net Zero.** Many of the actions in this report support the Authority commitment to net zero.

#### **6. Background papers (not previously published)**

State none or add details and links.

#### **7. Appendices**

- 1. **Parishes Day evaluation**
- 2. **SPF Business grants map**
- 3. **SPF Community, start-up and “decarbonise” grants**
- 4. **Parishes Map**

**Brian Taylor, Head of Planning, 16 January 2025**