

## **8. GOVERNANCE REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEFRA**

### **1. Purpose**

To inform government of the Authority's appetite for changes to be made to improve National Park governance.

### **2. Context**

**2.1** The new government has made clear its intentions to review certain governance arrangements for National Parks and this paper presents government with the views of this Authority in terms of what areas of change may be supported.

**2.2** This matter was discussed by Members at the Authority meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The agreed recommendation from that meeting was for a letter to be drafted for Members to agree at this meeting.

### **3. Proposals**

**3.1** It is proposed that the Authority writes to the Secretary of State to emphasise the Authority's willingness to support potential governance changes, and that the Authority makes specific suggestions as to what the government might want to consider changing.

**3.2** The proposed wording of that letter is below (this is the substantive content of the letter not the topping and tailing that would be added in the normal way).

**3.3** The wording has been chosen to reflect the debate held by Members although it is recognised that not all Members agreed with each other and no agreed position was voted on. This paper aims to reflect the general discussion of the Authority meeting and uses what intelligence we have from colleagues in Defra about what the government might be interested in considering.

**3.4** The main points of the letter would be:

**3.4.1** The Peak District National Park Authority is aware of the current imbalance within its Membership structure, and it wishes to work with partners and with the government to address the problem.

**3.4.2** The Authority has an ambition for the diversity of its Members to be more reflective of wider society and National Park users.

**3.4.3** The Authority supports a reduction in the number of Members it has.

**3.4.4** The Authority appreciates that the current system of appointing Members has a strong element of local democratic accountability, and it is important to maintain local representation on the Authority.

**3.4.5** The Authority recognises that any proposed changes to National Park governance needs to be considered alongside proposals for Local Government Reform.

**3.4.6** The Authority is aware that it lacks the power or ability to be able to achieve greater diversity of Members or a reduction in the size of the Membership without government making changes to how Members are appointed and without government reducing the number of Members it is required to have Under The National Park Authorities (England) Order 2015..

**3.4.7** Other National Park Authorities have used mechanisms such as cooption and direct appointment in an attempt to diversify their membership. The Peak District National Park Authority is open to considering such measures but only where this also helps meet the objectives of increasing diversity and reducing the overall

number of Members while remaining able to deliver against statutory purposes and duty.

#### **4. Recommendations**

- 1. That a representation is made to the Secretary of State setting out the points made in 3.4 above.**
- 2. That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in agreement with the Chair and Deputy Chair, to fully draft and send the representation.**

#### **5. Corporate Implications**

a. Legal

There are no adverse legal implications in relation to this proposal. The relevant legislation regarding membership of the Authority is set out and explained in the report.

b. Financial

It is possible that a significant reduction in the number of Members, should this result, may reduce overall costs to the Authority.

c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan

These proposals do not in themselves contribute to the delivery of the National Park Management Plan.

d. Risk Management

There is little risk associated with these proposals, the greater risk would be from not taking any action. Should no action be taken there is some risk that governance changes may be proposed by government that do not reflect the needs or wishes of this Authority. By proactively writing to the Secretary of State to suggest the types of changes that would be supported, it is hoped that these risks can be mitigated.

e. Net Zero

These proposals do not impact on net zero plans.

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

None.

#### **7. Appendices**

None.

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

Phil Mulligan, CEO, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

#### **Responsible Officer, Job Title**

Phil Mulligan, CEO, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025.