

7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT (PM)

1. Purpose

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

2. Context

2.1 National issues

2.1.1 Ministerial round table and visits

National Parks England (all ten CEOs plus NPE Director) recently held a round table with Minister for Nature and National Parks, Mary Creagh, also attended for a significant part by Secretary of State, Steve Reed. Messages were reiterated about the difficult financial position for English National Parks and the challenges to government finances going forward. NPE was clearly told there is support for National Parks becoming more enterprising and that the governance of National Parks will be reviewed. NPE made the case for needing to know as soon as possible what the new three-year funding agreement will be. The Minister has since started visiting more English National Parks and read outs from the visits she has done to Dartmoor and Exmoor are positive in terms of the Minister's growing understanding of National Park issues and realities.

2.1.2 Launch Secretary of State appointees recruitment and local brochure

The annual recruitment process has begun for new Secretary of State appointed Members. Defra has put together a new recruitment pack that emphasises the growing importance of ensuring that National Park Members reflect the diversity of society at large. We have our own page within the pack that matches these messages. We are currently recruiting for two vacancies on our Board. It is hoped that interviews will take place over the summer and appointments made by the Secretary of State in the autumn. We are also producing our own brochure on what being a Member involves and what we are looking for from our Members – this will be sent to all local authorities appointing Members following the local elections, so that potential candidates within each Authority can fully understand what is expected before putting themselves forward for appointment.

2.1.3 Defra access visit

We recently hosted a visit by the Defra Protected Landscapes Access to Nature team (approx. 25 people) which visited Castleton. We were able to get officials on bikes to experience some of our improved cycle routes and use trampers to explore 'Accessible Castleton' routes. We were also able to showcase farming and access improvements thanks to FiPL funding.

2.1.4 NPE board meeting and South Downs visit

The Chair and myself recently attended a face-to-face NPE board meeting and site visits in the South Downs National Park. In the Peak District we may share similar issues around honeypot sites and visitor pressures but, at least yet, not that of coastal erosion. We saw the new visitor centre at Seven Sisters and plans for nature recovery along the iconic meanders. We also visited several creative local businesses within the context of farm diversification including a café set up by and for cyclists (but serving everyone). The 'club coffee house' now has a dozen such venues within the National Park and it is a model that could fit well in the Peak District. The NPE board business covered the need for a strategy session to help agree the priorities for the organisation given the funding challenges and need to cut through more effectively in making our case to government and the nation.

2.1.5 NPE funding for Landscape Change Observatory

NPE has secured £500k from Defra to take the work we have done in the Peak District on using AI for land use mapping and develop this further for climate change adaptation and condition assessment and roll this out across protected landscapes. This is a huge

testament to the work of David Alexander and Simon Geikie. Simon and David will now work with NPE to put a team together to deliver the project, which will include some of their time, with suitable backfill arrangements put in place.

2.1.6 Chairs and CEOs Forum and Paul Hamblin Award

We recently hosted the annual National Parks UK Chairs and CEOs Forum in the Peak District as Ken is the UK lead Chair this year and I am the UK lead CEO. All 15 National Parks attended. This was an opportunity to showcase some of our cutting-edge work and present case studies whilst also sharing what some of our partners are doing. The meeting included an excellent visit to Chatsworth to hear from Lord Burlington and learn from Chatsworth's whole estate planning process. We also had after dinner speaking opportunities with Yvonne Witter on Mosaic and Championing National Parks for Everyone and Julian Glover on future countryside and National Park issues. The Forum was also an opportunity to present the first Paul Hamblin award. Paul was a former NPE Director and passionate advocate and campaigner for National Parks. He died recently and we were able to host some of Paul's family at an award presentation, which fittingly was awarded to our own Sue Smith for outstanding work on access issues over many years.

2.2 Regional issues

2.2.1 MP meetings

Several MP meetings have taken place, notably with John Pearce and John Whitby. The pressing issues discussed have included visitor/user pressure, peatland restoration and the progress of longstanding ideas around the potential reinstatement of a rail service along the Monsal Trail. There has been a pause in our monthly regional leaders' newsletter due to the local election period but this will continue again with the new comms team in due course.

2.2.2 EMCCA Biodiversity Taskforce

I am a member of the regional Biodiversity Taskforce which is meeting fairly regularly. The Taskforce is looking at the environmental aspects of the Mayor's regional spatial strategy and contributing to emerging environmental policy areas such as BNG, the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, the Land Use Framework and Local Nature Recovery Strategies. We are also looking at green financing opportunities and have contributed to the Mayor's Inclusive Growth Commission.

2.2.3 Destination Management Plan

The EMCCA Mayor recognises the importance of the visitor economy and has put funding into the region's two Local Visitor Economy Partnerships - LVEPs (Visit Peak District and Derbyshire in our case). Funding has also been provided for a regional Destination Management Plan, which through my role on the LVEP, I will be inputting into. I am due to speak to the consultants undertaking the development of the plan. I will be able to raise the issues surrounding our proposed Tourism Charter and associated issues that we are involved in helping manage around both increasing user pressure but also the need for the National Park to be here for everyone and a welcoming place for new audiences.

2.2.4 60th celebration event for the Pennine Way

The Chair and myself, along with several of our Ranger team, attended the 60th anniversary celebration event for the Pennine Way, which took place in Haws in the Yorkshire Dales. One of our Rangers, Martyn Sharp, has been working on maintenance of the Pennine way for over 30 years and the event was attended by someone still volunteering on the Pennine way who was at the opening event 60 years ago. The event included viewing of an exhibition that tells the story of the many ways in which the UK's first long distance trail has inspire creativity, in writing, music, crafts and art. Being one of the few people at the event who has not yet walked the entire 268 miles in one right-of-passage attempt, I felt a slight imposter. However, I think I was in good company with our Chair.

2.3 Local issues

2.3.1 NPMP Delivery Group

Our Management Plan Delivery Group met recently to update on progress and share highlights. There was good attendance from key partner organisation and it is positive to see increased engagement from some partners. We were able to update everyone on the latest developments and iterations with the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. The main news in this regard is that the necessary data from government is not yet available to confirm many of our targets.

2.3.2 Youth Voice

Good progress is being made on developing a 'Youth Impact Collective', following the presentation made to Members by a number of younger people at the last Member Forum. An online session and face-to-face workshop have been held with our external facilitator and there is a real sense of purpose and opportunity among those involved. We are now looking at specific ways in which the Youth Impact Collective can contribute to the work of the Authority and the ways in which the Authority (and Members) can be informed by younger voices. Many thanks to the Members who have contributed to this process, I'm sure they will all agree that we have some impressive and very able younger people that we would all benefit from listening to more.

2.3.3 CEO Roadshows: Grindleford and Tideswell

These Roadshows are continuing to be a very useful engagement tools. Attendance is consistently good and there is an increasing sense of these being genuine opportunities to learn from residents and for a discussion, as opposed to a feeling at the start which was more that they were an opportunity for criticising the Authority. There is also now a wider range of people attending and it is working well having different Roadshows at differing times of day to allow people with varied external commitments to attend.

2.4 Internal issues

2.4.1 Organisational change

The final stages of our organisational change programme are now in process. We have had success in redeploying some of the colleagues affected either into other roles in the Authority or via new funding, at least for a limited period of time, to continue in new or similar roles. There are, however, some colleagues who are now on a notice period before leaving us, which is of course a difficult situation for all those affected. We have also recruited to some roles, notably with the employment of Dan Smart as the Business Transformation Manager for Visitor and Cycle Hire Hubs. Dan's remit is to now implement much of what was recommended by our independent consultants and he is making a flying start.

2.4.2 Investors In People (IIP) assessment

We have been undertaking our three-yearly re-assessment for our IIP award. We currently hold a Silver award. A workforce survey has been carried out and the independent assessor has conducted a number of interviews with a selection of staff, volunteers and Members. We are awaiting the outcome of the review.

2.4.3 Staff training

We recently held staff training to raise awareness of unconscious bias and how we can overcome this to become a more inclusive organisation. We also brought in an external expert to help with individual and organisational mindset that was widely felt to be highly effective in terms of helping us all understand and prepare for living and working in a time of constant change.

3. Proposals

3.1 None

4. Recommendations

1. For Members to note the report

5. Corporate Implications

- a. Legal - none
- b. Financial – the report notes some new grant funding that will have a positive impact on our overall financial position.
- c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan – the report covers some of the work that is helping deliver the NPMP.
- d. Risk Management – a number of financial risks are noted in the report.
- e. Net Zero – no major net zero implications from the report.

6. Background papers (not previously published)

None

7. Appendices

None

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Phil Mulligan, CEO, 30 April 2025

Responsible Officer, Job Title

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