

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 support for Protected Landscapes and future funding

We have received a letter of support for our work from Mary Creagh, Minister for Nature and National Parks. Such a letter has been sent to all English National Park. The letter states, “this government will empower Protected Landscapes to become greener, wilder and more accessible.... Protected Landscapes are fundamental to strengthening the nation's economic health by looking after the natural resources we depend on. Through nature's recovery, Protected Landscapes protect communities from flooding, fight climate change, enable sustainable food production and create green jobs. They also have a vital role in connecting diverse communities with nature - underpinning the nation's mental and physical health and reducing the strain on our NHS.... In recognising their importance to the nation, this government has committed to reinvigorating Protected Landscapes with new legislation, resources and tools.”

This letter is very welcome, although it is as yet unclear as to what extent such stated support will translate into a positive funding settlement within Defra. There is no further news on our settlement for next year with the Defra allocation in the spending review representing a departmental cut, possibly not as large as some had speculated.

The government are clearly looking at alternative ways to fund or bring resources into protected landscapes, which may not bode well for our future core grant, with a call for evidence on alternative levers and funding mechanisms for protected landscapes. We will be responding to this call-in due course both as the Peak District National Park and National Parks England. One aspect that is being asked about is the potential for a ‘beneficiary pays’ principle, which may open the way for some sort of visitor charging. The question of whether visitors should be charged for going to a National Park has been picked up in the national and local media based upon a point I made in an interview. The point was that a very small charge per visitor would more than compensate for cuts in our government grant. I was not advocating for such a charge, rather making the point that the current government funding model for English National Parks is neither sufficient nor sustainable and therefore we need to have a debate about how National Parks are to be funded in the future, if we want to retain the service and quality necessary to deliver the multiple benefits we provide.

2.1.2 Secretary of State Member appointment update and new local Members

The Peak District National Park received the highest number of applications in the recent Secretary of State recruitment process, almost 80. The Chair has been involved in longlisting, shortlisting and interviewing potential candidates. Our recommendations are now with the Minister for approval, which we expect to take several months. At the same time, we are currently ‘on-boarding’ four new Members following local elections in Derbyshire and Staffordshire.

2.1.3 National engagement

By the time of the Authority meeting I will have attended a national gathering for senior leaders in our biggest national environmental organisations and English National Park CEOs. This follows a similar meeting last year and is aimed at building relationships and understanding. The focus this year is on identifying the challenges ahead and shaping our collective endeavor.

1.1 Regional issues

1.1.1 MP meetings

There have not been many MP meetings since the last update. MP engagement has focused on parking issues in Monyash and Edale villages.

1.1.2 EMCCA Biodiversity and Nature Taskforce

One meeting of the Taskforce has taken place since the last Authority report, however, I was unable to attend as I was at a National Parks England event in Dartmoor. The regional Mayor attended the Taskforce, which indicates a positive level of engagement. As a Taskforce member I took part in an online workshop on green finances.

1.1.3 Tourism

Following the Authority signing off our Tourism Charter at the last meeting, work has been progressing in explaining the Charter to partners and setting up a workshop for October to develop an action plan. Key partners will be asked to sign the Charter before the workshop and wider partners and stakeholders will be given the chance to sign up to the Charter and action plan following the workshop. I have given input into the EMCCA Destination Management Plan, we are awaiting the first draft of this.

1.1.4 NPMP Partnership Group

Our Management Plan Partnership Group recently held its annual meeting. There was an excellent level of engagement and high-level support from the vast majority of key partner organisations. Some organisations sent representatives along for the first time and other organisations have had a change of personnel so part of the meeting involved taking everyone through the Management Plan. Good discussions took place on issues covering climate change and visitor pressure. There was particular interest in our visitor data and use of AI in mapping. Agreements to share more information across organisations were made. The Tourism Charter was presented to the group and broadly supported.

1.1.5 Youth Impact Collective

The Youth Impact Collective attended the Future Countryside Conference held at Chatsworth. Two of our Collective members were on a panel with younger people from other National Parks and farming organisations. Our representatives were very impressive and showed how worthwhile the work has been in helping this group of younger people develop, find their voice and represent their interests and views.

1.1.6 Police engagement

A decision has been jointly made with the Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to merge our Peak Summit meeting (led by myself and the Derbyshire PCC) with the Derbyshire Rural Crime Partnership meeting. Many of the invitees crossed over and the agendas for both groups were similar. There is still a commitment to working with neighboring police forces.

1.1.7 CEO engagement

A CEO Roadshow has taken place in Dunford Bridge. This is a very small community on the northern edge of the National Park. A positive conversation took place with local farmers who attended. Whilst numbers were not high, it is important to visit all parts of the National Park and give everyone the opportunity of attending if they can.

I also attended the Tissington Well Dressing celebration, the launch of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's new strategy and a Monyash residents meeting focused on issues of parking and motorcycles in the centre of the village.

1.2 Internal issues

1.2.1 Organisational change

The recent organisational change programme is now complete with departing staff having left the organisation, apart from where tactical contract extensions have been offered. New roles have now been recruited to. The intention is to now pause further organisational change until we know the outcome of our three-year funding settlement, expected in the autumn.

1.2.2 Investors In People (IIP) assessment

We now have the outcome of our recent three-yearly re-assessment for our IIP award. We have been given a Gold award. This is a significant achievement, with only 17% of organisations holding such an award. We were also given a Silver wellbeing award. Both awards represent hard work and continual improvement over the last nine years. An action plan will now be put together following a detailed review of the assessor's comments and recommendations.

1.2.3 Resources

We ended last financial year having made the required surplus we had planned in our budget plus a small additional surplus that we have put into reserves to help prepare for expected future cuts in our core grant. We are progressing with our plans to spend the additional Defra capital in this year. This money can only be spent on capital and has to be spent or returned at the end of the year. There are regular meetings monitoring progress on our spending plans. We have also submitted our Landscape Connections National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) bid, which would be worth £10m over ten years if successful. Another NLHF bid for £5m for the North Lees estate is also being developed.

3. Proposals

None

4. Recommendations

1. For Members to note the report

5. Corporate Implications

- a. Legal - none
- b. Financial – the report notes some concerns over our future funding position and reports progress on some current additional income generation.
- 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, Publication Date

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