

## **BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR “CORRIDOR CONNECTIONS” – NATURE RECOVERY AND LANDSCAPE CONNECTIONS IN THE WHITE PEAK.**

### **1. Purpose**

To seek approval for the Authority to accept and deliver a National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) Landscape Connections Pre-Development Phase project which it has recently applied for, as it involves expenditure of more than £200,000.

### **2. Context**

2.1 The NHLF has recently launched a new fund, Landscape Connections as it wishes to help designated Protected Landscapes and other world-class landscapes across the UK to become better for nature and people. A total of £150 million will be invested in to around 20 long-term projects in:

- National Parks and National Landscapes in England and Wales
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Northern Ireland
- National Parks and other equally important world-class landscapes in Scotland

The aim is to support those who care for these places to strengthen them as working landscapes, which are alive with nature and provide space for people to relax and connect with the environment. Grants for up to £10 million can be applied for with a project delivery phase for up to eight years.

2.2 NHLF Grants of between £10,000 to £250,000 can be applied for if preparatory work is required before applying for Landscape Connections funding. It is this funding which has been sought before applying for the larger Landscape Connections funding. This pre-development phase funding will bring in additional expertise and resources, support the creation of a new partnership, undertake feasibility work, support engagement with local communities and organisations and help articulate the initial project vision.

2.3 An initial workshop with potential partners was held in the summer of 2024 and a small working group including representatives from the Authority, Chatsworth Estate, National Trust and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust was established to develop the project.

### **3. Proposal**

3.1 The project proposal is to build the foundations and capacity to create and deliver a long term, large-scale landscape connection programme across the White Peak, which will transform nature recovery, protect our natural and cultural heritage and engage more people with nature. This is a unique opportunity to connect people to the natural and cultural heritage of the area using existing trails which have been formed from old railway lines.

3.2 The aim is to build our knowledge and understanding of land and species condition within the area, enabling us to make strong evidenced-based decisions on where and how to have the most impact. This will involve identifying and growing the partnerships across the White Peak, consolidate and expand our collective knowledge, skills and experience, explore potential green-career pathways and bring communities, including

communities underserved by the White Peak, landowners, businesses and farmers together to create a shared vision, governance and activity for a future large-scale transformational landscape connection bid and subsequent programme. This project will support and inform the Authority's and partners' current work, and position us to make a transformational impact in the future.

3.3 The project proposal is for an initial 18-month period and for the Authority to employ two FTE officers to develop the Landscape Connections project further with partners. The NHLF will not provide funding for Authority overheads for project staff so the estimated overhead cost of £29,753 will need to be covered by the Authority.

#### 4. Recommendations

1. That acceptance of the funding award for the Landscape Connections project of up to £248,455 be approved. Approval of the terms of funding be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Finance Manager and Authority Solicitor.
2. That approval be granted to (1) incur expenditure up to £279,955 (excluding overheads) to progress the project pursuant to Part 3, C3 (c) of Standing Orders, and (2) enter into contracts and/or agreements as required for the delivery of the project, subject to compliance with the Contract Procedure Rules and Standing Orders generally.
3. To note that a recruitment exercise will be undertaken to appoint temporary posts (to be funded out of the external funding award) to progress the project.

#### 5. Corporate Implications

##### a. Legal

Pursuant to section 65(5) of the Environment Act 1995, the Authority has power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the accomplishment of its statutory purposes. This project falls within the Authority's statutory purposes. This power is subject to any express statutory or public law constraints which should be considered holistically and as the project progresses.

Pursuant to section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Authority has power to appoint officers on such reasonable terms and conditions as is considered necessary for the proper performance of the Authority's functions.

##### b. Financial

The sources of project funding and total project cost are set out in the table below. Whilst the majority of the project costs will be covered by the NHLF there will be additional cost to the Authority in terms of on-going management and leadership time and for the overhead costs for the two FTE project staff employed directly by the Authority (£29,753).

Source of funding	Description	Total £
PDNPA	PDNPA in kind (Cultural Heritage Team)	£5,000
National Trust	Cash contribution	£10,000
Chatsworth Estate	Non-cash contribution to GIS work	£5,000

PDNPA	Marketing and acknowledging NLHF	£1,500
PDNPA	AI Land surveys (Landscape Observatory)	£10,000
NHLF	NHLF pre-development phase (Landscape Connections)	£248,455
<b>Total</b> excluding PDNPA overheads for project officers		<b>£279,955</b>

c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan

The proposed project activities will contribute to a number of our policies and legal obligations:

- The 30 by 30 target through which the Government has agreed to conserve (protect) 30% of land by 203
- The Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework
- Peak District National Park Management Plan (NPMP), all seven of the special qualities; substantial contribution to Aim One Climate Change, Aim Two Landscape and Nature Recovery and Aim Three Welcoming Place including the three objectives with their targets and headline delivery for each aim; and to contribute to Aim Four Thriving Communities
- The Authority Plan in particular Objective E To have best practice arrangements in place for the Authority's assets of the Enabling delivery aim; and Aims One, Two, Three and Four NPMP aims as above
- The Landscape Strategy 2023 was approved by Members at the Authority meeting in December 2022. It describes what is special about the Peak District landscapes, sets out the issues affecting the landscape and provides management guidelines to address the issues, conserve and enhance the landscape (minute reference 99/22).
- The Peak District Nature Recovery Plan which has been developed with constituent Local Authorities, key partners and stakeholders. It is planned to present the draft plan to members for them to consider at the Authority meeting early in 2024.
- The Diverse Audience Plan will be reviewed later in 2025/26 and proposed updates shared with Authority Members for their consideration and approval.

d. Risk Management

The project plan has its own risk matrix that covers risks to delivery of the project. Undertaking the project itself does not pose any significant risks to the Authority.

e. Net Zero

Many of the activities being explored and to be delivered for landscape connections will also contribute to the Authority's role in climate change and working towards net zero. The work with farmers, land managers and landowners will support the conservation and enhancement of woodland, wood pasture and trees, species rich grassland, water corridors and regenerative farming including herbal leys. The proposed engagement with underserved communities is also likely to include exploring a sustainable transport approach.

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

None

**7. Appendices**

None

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

Phil Mulligan, Chief Executive Officer, 16 September 2025

**Responsible Officer, Job Title**

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