

## **11. BOARDROOM APPRENTICE PROGRAMME 2026**

### **1. Purpose**

Following on from the success of the 2025 Boardroom Apprentice, for Members to consider the opportunity for the Authority to Host a new Boardroom Apprentice as part of the national programme. Becoming part of the programme may continue to help the Authority to increase diversity of its membership.

### **2. Context**

**2.1** The Boardroom Apprentice scheme is a 12 month board learning, development and placement programme which aims to give interested persons practical experience of being a member of a board. Host Boards are from various organisations including public sector arms length bodies, Government departmental boards, voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. The host board provides the practical experience of taking part in meetings whilst the programme operators support this with 8 learning days to increase knowledge and understanding of relevant topics including governance, communications and partnerships.

**2.2** The host board is expected to provide a Board Buddy as a mentor for the apprentice and to provide additional support beyond the meetings to help the apprentice grow and develop in their role. The payment of travel expenses for the apprentice is encouraged.

**2.3** Apprentices have to apply for places and then a selection panel of former Boardroom Apprentices undertake the selection process to match them with host boards. Host boards are not involved in the selection process. There are opportunities throughout the programme where current host boards are invited to contribute to other panel discussions and share their experiences

**2.4** Defra has again been promoting this programme and encouraging National Park Authorities (NPA) to take part. The Peak District National Park Authority hosted its first Boardroom Apprentice in 2025. That Apprentice has gone on to become an Authority Member following a successful recruitment and selection exercise undertaken by Defra.

**2.5** There would be a time commitment for the Authority Member who is appointed as a Board Buddy to support the apprentice as they would be expected to meet regularly to discuss meeting papers before meetings and afterwards to consider their participation in and experience of the meeting, together with regular reviews of how the placement is working for both the apprentice and the host.

### **3. Proposals**

#### **Experience of the 2025 Programme**

**3.1** The 2025 Boardroom Apprentice and Board Buddy have both provided positive feedback on their experience of the programme, as summarised below.

- A Boardroom Apprentice may bring a fresh perspective on the issues under consideration beyond the established membership, due to their different life experiences, career and training.
- An aspiration should be that the Authority provides opportunities to utilise this differing perspective and knowledge base to aid Authority and wider Peak District purposes. The same aspiration should also apply to all our Members.
- The 2025 Boardroom Apprentice found the experience inspiring and educational and obtained valuable insights into the protection of our landscapes and the careful balancing act that the Authority strives to achieve between conservation, community and heritage.

- The Boardroom Apprentice appreciated the welcome, support, and encouragement that they received, and has gained confidence to become more involved at a boardroom level. The Board Buddy felt that they also benefitted in their own professional development as a Member as a result of the questions and observations that the Boardroom Apprentice raised.
- The purpose of the scheme is to encourage diversity of thought in the boardroom and it is thought that this was achieved.

## **2026 Programme Proposal**

- 3.2** Due to the success of the 2025 Board Room Apprentice, it is proposed that the Authority supports the application to become a host board for a Board Room Apprentice for 2026. If the Authority is matched with a suitable apprentice the Authority would also need to agree to support the apprentice by inviting them to attend all Authority and Resources Committee meetings as a non-voting Member, by providing a Boardroom Buddy (mentor) and by paying travel expenses incurred by the Apprentice for attending the meetings.
- 3.3** It is not proposed to invite the Apprentice to Planning Committee meetings, even without voting rights, as they would not be a Member appointed by official process and would not have taken part in our Planning training for Members so there could be more risk relating to decisions made by the Planning Committee.
- 3.4** At the time of writing this report, the UK Boardroom Apprentice Programme isn't able to confirm that the 2026 programme will take place. However, they have sought expressions of interest by 12 September 2025, to gauge interest in the programme in order to be in a position to confirm whether or not it will go ahead. Therefore, due to the timescales of the expressions of interest, the Authority has submitted an expression of interest to take part during 2026 subject to Full Authority approval. As part of the Host application we have stated that we are looking to have an increased diversity and inclusivity of Members and to have a wider diversity of skills and knowledge available to us. If the Full Authority decides not to support the application it will be withdrawn.

## **4. Recommendations**

- 1. That the application to become a Host Board for a Boardroom Apprentice for 2026 is agreed.**
- 2. That it is agreed to support any matched Apprentice by inviting them to attend meetings of the Authority and the Resources Committee as a non-voting member. This is subject to satisfactory completion of a Memorandum of Understanding, signing up to the Members Code of Conduct, signing a non-disclosure agreement, compliance with Standing Orders and completion of a register of interests.**
- 3. That a Member is selected as a Boardroom Buddy to mentor any matched Apprentice.**
- 4. That any matched Apprentice would be eligible to claim for the payment of travel and subsistence allowances as set out in Schedule 2 of the Members' Allowances Scheme when attending meetings of the Authority, Resources Committee and any training or other events as necessary is agreed.**

## **5. Corporate Implications**

- a. Legal

A detailed memorandum of understanding (MOU) would be signed between the Host Board and the Boardroom Apprentice. This would be sent to the Host Board in advance of the Boardroom Apprentice commencing. The MOU includes an information sharing agreement, confidentiality and reflects directly back to the host board's code of practice and standard operating procedures. The Authority may also ask the Apprentice to sign a non-disclosure agreement as they would have access to some Authority confidential information as part of their role. The Apprentice would be under the same obligations as Members of the Authority and would be expected to sign up to the Authority's Member Code of Conduct, comply with Standing Orders and complete a register of interests.

b. Financial

There is no fee for the Authority to become a Host Board however, the Apprentice programme encourages the payment of travel expenses for Apprentices so the cost of this would vary based on where an Apprentice needed to travel from. Other costs would include provision of an iPad and costs of any extra training or events which the Authority may identify as being appropriate for the Apprentice to attend. Members' costs are usually covered by the Business Centre budget so any expected increase in costs would need to be considered in budget setting.

c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan

The proposal fits with Objective 8 of the National Park Management plan as a possible way for young people and underserved communities to be involved in shaping policies. It also fits with the Authority Plan Objective F to have best practice governance arrangements in place as a possible way to aid diversity of the membership.

d. Risk Management

There is a risk having a Member not appointed by the usual mechanisms, however this is mitigated by the Apprentice not having voting rights at meetings and having a Member appointed as a Board Buddy to mentor them. Also, the Apprentice will be required to sign up to the Member Code of Conduct and complete a register of interests.

e. Net Zero

This does not contribute to net zero but may enable wider provision of views on net zero proposals by the Authority.

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

None.

**7. Appendices**

None.

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

Lisa Walker, Business Centre Manager. 25 September 2025

**Responsible Officer, Job Title**

Emily Fox, Head of Resources.