

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 Defra news

There is no further news from Defra on the future funding of national parks. We are awaiting news of when we will find out what our three-year settlement will be and how much it will be. The case continues to be made, via National Parks England, for an early settlement and one that puts national parks on a sustainable footing.

Thanks to a joint effort with partners across the protected landscape sector and with NGO partners, the government's proposal to remove the LURA (Levelling Up and Regeneration Act) 'duty to further' the purposes of national parks has been abandoned (for now at least).

A new All Party Parliamentary Group for National Parks has been created with the involvement of Derbyshire Dales MP John Whitby. There will also be a Campaigns for National Park (CNP) parliamentary reception, hosted by John, in December, where CNP will launch a new report on national park governance. I will be attending this event along with a member of staff who is part of our National Park Training Academy and at least one of our Members. Hopefully we will have news of our funding settlement by then so it will be an opportunity to discuss what the settlement means for us directly with politicians and officials.

There is a new Permanent Secretary in Defra and there has been early NPE engagement with him. The Deputy Director responsible for national parks has also continued with local visits, most recently hosted by the Lake District NPA.

2.1.2 Protected Landscape Partnership (PLP) news

The PLP brings together national parks, national landscapes, national trails and Natural England. The process for appointing an independent Chair of the PLP is ongoing, I believe interviews have taken place. We are awaiting news of who has been successful. A strong independent Chair should be able to make the case for support and investment across government. PLP is also a vehicle for funding certain projects, such as our Landscape Observatory.

2.1.3 National Parks England (NPE) news

NPE has now launched a recruitment process for a new Executive Director. NPE continues to deliver policy work on climate, nature, farming, engagement and other areas via a small staff team and officer groups with temporary oversight being provided by Tom Hind, CEO of North York Moors, acting as Company Secretary. It is worth noting that there is an unprecedented level of change within the leadership of English national parks at the moment. Recruitment processes are underway for new CEOs at Northumberland NPA, Dartmoor NPA, The Broad Authority and now also the Yorkshire Dales NPA.

2.1.4 National Parks UK (NPUK) news

Our Chair currently holds the annual chairing role for NPUK. We hosted a face to face gathering of all 15 national parks in the Peak District in April and in December there will be an online UK Chairs forum that we will also host. This will cover national updates and policy developments as well as the latest on the UK brand proposition work.

2.1.5 National Parks Partnership (NPP) news

NPP now host the UK Comms Unit and they are currently recruiting for a new Director of Communications and Brand. There have been a number of new corporate partnerships

secured by NPP recently and a number of other potential partnerships close to being secured, including a new partnership to replace the Columbia clothing deal that has now expired. NPP recently hosted a Big Ideas Forum which generated content that will now help direct their work.

2.1.6 Natural England news

Natural England has just launched its new strategic plan. This focuses on nature recovery for growth, health and security. The aim is to be more enabling and focus at a more strategic level on the issues that make the biggest difference. I attended the Midlands regional launch and raised the point that whilst a high-level strategic approach is a rational response to NE's own financial constraints, there will still be a need for resources to be allocated for progressing local case work through the planning system.

3. Regional issues

3.1 MP engagement

Nothing significant to note in this report.

3.2 EMCCA engagement

I attended the launch of the regional growth plan, which places importance on the growth of the visitor economy. By the time of the Authority meeting, I will have spoken at the Mayor's Peak Partnership Summit event in Bakewell where I will be focusing on the need to manage the impact of a growing visitor economy. I will also have attended another meeting of the Biodiversity and Nature Taskforce. I am currently in the process of submitting outline funding bids for any surplus capital there may be with the EMCCA budget this year. It should be noted that the government has announced the forthcoming abolition of Police and Crime Commissioners, with powers being passed over to regional mayors. This will mean that in addition to the EMCCA mayor's existing remit, responsibility for two police forces will soon be added.

3.3 Community engagement

Consultation has now been launched on the next stage of the Local Plan.

CEO Roadshows are continuing with one due to have been held in Baslow by the time of the Authority meeting.

Parishes Day has taken place and although I was unable to attend, I know it was a useful event. We do however need to encourage greater participation from parishes to ensure this event is worthwhile in the future.

3.4 Tourism engagement

Since the last Authority meeting, we have held a partner workshop on tourism which was well attended and allowed the aims of our Tourism Charter to be presented and discussed. There was a good level of support for work to help achieve the objectives of the Charter.

3.5 Moorland engagement

I am continuing to engage with moorland managers and owners. Bradfield Moor recently hosted a visit for a few partners, including Natural England and environmental NGOs. It was invaluable to hold discussions about moorland management whilst being stood on moorland to give context and example to enrich the debate. Subject to the weather later this week I should be attending a visit to Abney Moor along with colleagues from Moors for the Future Partnership, to see examples of restoration work that have been developed over many years, and which are regarded as having been successful in relation to some measures.

3.6 Internal issues

3.6.1 Organisational change and staffing

We have recently closed our consultation on proposed staffing changes that are aimed at reducing our overall costs to achieve a balanced budget over the medium-term financial plan period. The leadership team is currently reviewing all the consultation responses and is hoping to be able to adjust the original proposed plans based on feedback received and further work on trying to secure additional income. An update will be given to Members at the Member Forum following the Authority meeting.

3.6.2 Capital programme

The Assets and Enterprise team are exceptionally busy due to the additional capital we received this year from Defra which must be spent by the end of the financial year. There are some tight timescales, particularly where we require various permissions for some of the work we are planning. The focus of the spend has been on projects that aim to generate revenue in the future. The completion and success of some projects will help to mitigate some of the savings we have proposed across the Authority. We do not yet know whether there will be any additional Defra capital next year, but we have a strong pipeline of projects to be able to take advantage of any further offer should it arise. We are also seeking to maximise revenue secured through renting out space in Aldern House and there is an ongoing programme of refurbishment and making new space available. I am grateful to staff for their understanding in this and welcome their support where it is necessary to move teams from one part of the building to another so that we can generate additional income.

3.6.3 75th anniversary preparations

There are three levels at which we are planning to celebrate our 75th anniversary next year. First, we are collaborating with the other national parks that will be 75 next year (the Lakes, Dartmoor and Eryri) and we have jointly commissioned an independent report to be written. The report will review what 75 years of having a national park in each of our areas has achieved, and where there were limitations or obstacles to our successes. It will also give a forward look at what is now needed to secure the ongoing impact and achievements of the four national parks in question. The independent author secured to write the report is Andrew McCloy, a former Chair of this Authority and a published author in this field. The report will be finalised in the summer, and a national launch event is being planned, that we will host in the Peak District on behalf of all four national parks (proposed date 15th July, tbc).

Secondly, we are working with partners across this national park to facilitate and encourage local events and activities to mark our shared 75th. We will be providing a logo and supporting material that partners can use for events. We are also looking at how we can coordinate and promote all the events that take place.

Thirdly, we are organising our own events and activities to mark 75 years of the Authority. We will be deploying an anniversary logo for the year and are looking at other ways in which the milestone can be highlighted to the public. This includes some 75th merchandise for sale in our National Park Centres. We will be partnering with the Buxton International Festival next summer where an exhibition will be hosted based on imagery from our 'Archive Unlocked' project. The opening of the exhibition will be 10th July, which will form part of the opening of the overall Festival. The exhibition will go on to be displayed in our National Park Centres in Castleton and Bakewell. The festival programme will also include a couple of talks on the National Park. We are also developing a programme of guided walks and new volunteering opportunities to help celebrate the 75th. Other media opportunities are being explored, and it is expected that there will be some marking of the actual birthday on 17th April.

Internally, we will be celebrating the birthday at an all staff, Member and volunteer garden party at Aldern House (proposed date 22nd July 2026) and as a mark of how hard our staff work and how committed they are, we will be giving all staff their own birthday off next year as an extra day of leave.

4. Proposals

None

5. Recommendations

For Members to note the report

5. Corporate Implications

- a. Legal - none
- b. Financial – the report notes some concerns over our future funding position. There is ongoing work to manage potential cuts and generate additional income.
- 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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