

## **9. Communities Aim update for NPMP**

### **1. Purpose**

To inform Members about the Authority's progress since January 2025 with respect to the Aims and Objectives of the National Park Management Plan in relation to Thriving Communities, and what this means for the future.

### **2. Context**

**2.1** The 26 July 2024 Authority meeting agreed the Programmes and Resources themes would continue to align with the National Park Management Plan (NPMP) 2023-28 aims (minute reference 65/22). This paper continues this programme of reporting against the NPMP aims with a focus on Thriving Communities. The NPMP objectives relevant to this Aim are as follows:

**2.2** OBJECTIVE 1: TO LOWER GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS SIGNIFICANTLY, FOCUSSED ON THE LARGEST EMITTERS WITHIN OUR INFLUENCE

**2.3** OBJECTIVE 10: TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES BY IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND CONNECTION TO SERVICES;

**2.4** OBJECTIVE 11: TO PROMOTE A FLOURISHING ECONOMY IN ACCORD WITH NATURE RECOVERY AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION.

**2.5** In pursuing the statutory purposes defined for National Parks in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, (amended by the Environment Act 1995), National Park Authorities have a related duty to seek to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities in the area.

**2.6** The key tool available to the Authority is the adoption of core policies in its Local Plan which can drive appropriate and sometimes exceptional routes for development based on the local needs and circumstances of the area (accessibility, affordability of housing stock, availability of local employment, and aging demographic profile).

**2.7** Beyond its planning function the Authority must work closely with partner organisations through the National Park Management Plan to bring about a more sustainable living and working environment for local people and businesses.

**2.8** The National Park is home to around 36,000 people. Population has declined by 5.3% since 2011 with the number of young and working age people down by 17.9% and 12% respectively. Business and employment data is difficult to accurately 'cut' to the National Park boundary but the Peak District Economic Development Assessment (2025) suggests there are around 8,000 businesses operating in the National Park. There are 1,368 farm holdings across 107,487 ha of land and the total agricultural labour force is 3,032 including both full, part-time and casual workers. There is a slightly higher proportion of micro-businesses than elsewhere and whilst mining now only accounts for only 360 jobs in the Peak District (2%) the proportion far outweighs the regional (0.2) and national (0.1) picture. Although overall figures are inflated due to the data issue noted it is clear that tourism remains a vital industry to the National Park with around 25% of all employees, significantly higher than regional (8%) and national (9%) averages

### **3. Progress Since January 2025**

#### **3.1 Local Plan Review**

**3.1.1** Following consultation into the Issues and Options for the Local Plan in autumn 2024 officers developed the evidence base and, along with our member steering group, began the production of our "Preferred Approaches". This culminated in a

further period of consultation in the autumn and winter of 2025. In total 1230 comments were made from 133 responders to the consultation.

- 3.1.2 In response to this and the completion of some significant additional evidence reports, officers are now in the process of writing our final version of the plan for consultation and submission to the Planning Inspectorate by the end of December 2026.

### **3.1.3 Evidence and Key Issues.**

**3.1.3.1 Strategic housing need** – A key study has sought to establish the housing provision that will underpin the new plan applying an alternative method for calculating housing needs. National Planning Policy Guidance currently allows for alternative approaches to take account of National Park purposes and enable a scale of development that is compatible with the statutory protection intended for National Parks. The work takes into account population changes, housing stock, and the affordable housing needs of the area and considers the different scale of pressure that would arise at varying scales of development, i.e. 48 homes per year, and 95 homes per year (applying delivery assumptions based on previous trends). The Peak District's Housing Need (locally derived methodology) 2025-2045 is calculated as 95 dwellings per annum. The Housing Provision (Requirement) is 79 dwellings per annum over the same period. Housing Provision means the number of homes that local plan policies will enable to be delivered. It is neither a target nor a limit. If the Housing Provision is delivered, and in combination with other policy mechanisms that prioritise new permanent homes rather than holiday homes, population in the National Park will increase slightly

**3.1.3.2 Settlement capacity** – In addition to the above method new work has also been completed to take a detailed assessment of the sensitivity and potential capacity of 23 of the largest settlements in the National Park. This confirms the high sensitivity across the whole National Park which limits the scale and extent of development possible, but also differentiates between places of very high sensitivity and others parts of our settlements that may offer potential for development with carefully integrated and well-designed schemes.

**3.1.3.3 Employment site needs** – A review of business site needs has been undertaken and supports the expansion of our policy of safeguarding the most sustainable sites (including the addition of Aldern House as a business hub within Bakewell)

### **3.2 Affordable Housing Delivery**

3.2.1 Building on our commitments in the National Park Management Plan officers and members of both the National Park Authority and Derbyshire Dales District Council have continued to meet and discuss the scope to improve delivery of affordable homes in the National Park. This has led to detailed dialogue on the scope for a pipeline of sites and a closer alignment between the work of the District Council Housing Team and the Local Planning and Development Management functions of the National Park Authority. Two significant schemes were approved during 2025 in Bakewell and Youlgrave which will bring about 50 new homes. Several more sites are being actively considered and developed through a regular programme of meetings giving early guidance on site acceptability, viability issues and the nature of legal agreements which can give both confidence to lenders and secure affordable home in perpetuity to conform with adopted policy aims.

### **3.3 Second homes**

3.3.1 As noted above significant increases in Air BnB use along with other changes to the demographic of the area has impacted on the local population. Changes to use classes relating to short term holiday lets had been mooted by the previous

government but this has not been implemented thus far by the current Labour Government meaning that there remains no ability for planning to control this issue. However, the issues have been flagged by the Local Plan review and progress is being made on a new policy for “Primary Occupation” meaning that any new housing will have to be occupied as the main, permanent residence, allowing some control for new stock.

### **3.4 Economic Development**

**3.4.1 Business Peak District** – The National Park Authority continues to host this group which has seen an increase in membership by local businesses over the last 12 months and positive activity in terms of networking and promotional work.

**3.4.2 Shared Prosperity Fund (DDD/HP/SM)** – The programmes have continued successfully across the Derbyshire Dales, High Peak and Staffordshire Moorlands Areas with a range of grants being offered to businesses and communities committed to increasing the resilience and efficiency of the business offer to safeguard and increase jobs in the local area and to respond to climate change issues through cleaner and energy efficient operations. Maps are included in the Appendices to highlight the geographic spread of grants that includes many successful applications within the National Park.

**3.5 Sustainable Travel** – Despite a reduction in resources available to the National Park Authority some good progress has been made in relation to Active Travel and connections to our popular network of trails. Officers collaborated closely with partner organisations and the Local Access Forum to develop our high-level Network Plan for the National Park in support of walking, wheeling, cycling and horse riding. At the time of writing, we are working with partners to develop the next stage of capability funding to enable scheme development. Officers are seeking to align this work with other partners and strategic bodies such as the Buxton Town Team and EMCCA to influence investment into the area and realise our aims of sustainable access to the Monsal Trail from key rail hubs in Buxton and Matlock, encouraging higher numbers of journeys without the need for private car use.

## **4. Recommendations**

**1. To note the progress report for the National Park Management Plan Thriving Communities Theme.**

## **5. Corporate Implications**

- a. **Legal** - Pursuant to sections 5 and 11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the Authority must deliver to the statutory purposes and statutory duty, respectively, when carrying out its work. Monitoring the Authority's progress against the aims and objectives set out in the National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan will enable appropriate scrutiny and safeguard legal compliance. With regard to affordable housing delivery, the Authority's Legal Team are closely engaged in these discussions and provide advice e.g. with regard to the construction and scope of legal agreements and pursuing appropriate valuations of affordable homes
- b. **Financial** - Authority support to this aim is supported by core budget. Specifically, within the Policy and Communities Team, Development and Enforcement Teams, Cultural Heritage Team and Minerals and Strategic Planning Teams. Until this year the Policy and Communities Team had run a very popular small grant scheme but this has unfortunately had to be cut owing to the ongoing strain on the Authority

budget. The Local Plan process requires the preparation of new evidence and this is provided by a specific Local Plan reserve. During the 2024/25 period this has also been supplemented by a grant of £227,962.50. The grant funding has significantly enhanced and enabled the completion of the evidence base (more details above). Officers also frequently discuss the potential for shared evidence commissions to be prepared with neighbouring planning authorities.

- c. **National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan** - The actions set out in this report directly contribute to the NPMP Aims and our own Authority Plan
- d. **Risk Management** – Key risks exist in the current consultation into the NPPF which could result in some weakening to policy language and clarity of approach in respect to National Parks, and also from the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 in respect to Strategic Planning. NPAs will not be in control of strategic planning (in the form of Mayoral area Strategic Development Strategies) and therefore matters such as the setting of housing figures. Such figures will be heavily dictated by the Government's growth ambitions. Current methodologies seek a shift away from a brownfield/urban ideology towards rural areas with the relaxation of greenbelt and higher figures emerging in rural areas where affordability is particularly acute. Officers understand the NPA's will only be a 'consultee' in the process.
- e. **Net Zero** - Many of the actions in this report support the Authority commitment to net zero.

## 6. Background papers (not previously published)

[Local Plan Review: Peak District National Park](#) (link available to website)

## 7. Appendices

- a. SPF Business Grants
- b. SPF Community Grants

## Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

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