

WELCOMING PLACE AIM OVERVIEW (SLF)

1. Purpose

To inform Members about the Authority's progress in the Welcoming Place aim since March 2025 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 Landscape and Nature Recovery.

2.2 The NPMP vision includes the Peak District National Park (PDNP) being a welcoming place where all are inspired to care and communities thrive. The activities described in this report contribute to the [special qualities](#), and in particular deliver for Aim Three [Welcoming Place](#): the PD is a welcoming place where all are inspired to enjoy, care for and connect to its special qualities:

2.2.1 Objective 7: To encourage a sustainable visitor economy that supports local businesses, cares for the NP's special qualities and respects the well-being of local communities.

2.2.2 Objective 8: To create opportunities for young people and those from under-served communities to connect with and enjoy the NP.

2.2.3 Objective 9: To promote the NP as a place where there are opportunities for the improvement of physical and mental health and wellbeing.

As well as contributing to Aim One [Climate Change](#), Aim Two [Landscape and Nature Recovery](#), and Aim Four [Thriving Communities](#) including many of the objectives with their targets and headline delivery of the NPMP. They also contribute to the [Authority Plan](#) Aims One, Two, Three and Four actions.

2.3 The 25 Year Environment Plan 2018 set out the framework and vision for what the Government wants to do to improve the environment within a generation. The Environmental Improvement Plan was revised and launched in December 2025 [Environmental Improvement Plan 2025](#)

2.4 The [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) (PLTOF) was launched in January 2024. It seeks to support Protected Landscapes (PLs) in meeting their huge potential for nature, climate, people and place and to deliver the EIP25 goals. Area 9 is to improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with PLs. However, the access targets remain under review. Members approved the incorporation of the targets into the current NPMP at the Authority AGM in July 2025 (Minute 85/25). It is anticipated that the NPMP review programme will be presented to members later this year.

2.5 Further organisational change during 2025/26 has again included a reduction in core funded engagement capacity which will impact on the ability to develop and manage externally-funded engagement projects. Of the four priority engagement projects identified and for which sources of external funding were being explored from March 2025 the following provides an update:

- 2.5.1** Moorland Discovery Centre (MDC) on the Longshaw Estate - The National Trust (NT) took over full delivery costs of the MDC from July 2025. NT continues to explore options to maintain delivery at the MDC.
 - 2.5.2** Landscape Discovery Centre (LDC) at Longdendale – external funding including from the Peak District Foundation (PDF) has been explored and proposals for the next three years of funding will be presented to Members through a separate report to this same meeting.
 - 2.5.3** Ambassador Schools project – external funding has not yet been secured for 2026/27 but elements of the Ambassador Schools project will form part of the LDC project and there will be Ranger support for some schools.
 - 2.5.4** Community Engagement project – external funding has not been secured for 2026/27.
 - 2.6** The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has continued to be successful both nationally and locally resulting in continued funding for FiPL officers and a £1.6 Million project fund for PD farmers and land managers in 2026/27 with the same indicative allocation for 2027/28 and 2028/29. The FiPL people theme provides funding for access enhancements and educational access.
 - 2.7** The Diverse Audience Plan (DAP) has not been reviewed. To simplify the number of plans, and mitigate our reduced capacity, going forward the DAP will be reviewed and incorporated with the Authority's Equality Plan.
 - 2.8** Whilst the economic benefits to the NP from tourism are acknowledged the need for better and more shared data across partners has also been recognized. Work continues to use data to better understand the changes in terms of user numbers and patterns and the impact that this may be having on the area's communities, its fragile natural environment and cultural heritage assets. This has started to be explored with Members with next steps identified along with a partnership-based Tourism Charter. A key focus of the Charter will be to re-energise work on Area Management Plans. The first of this kind has been launched in the Castleton and Mam Tor area bringing together a set of actions from partners and formulating a more joined up spatial approach.
 - 2.9** The Authority seeks, as its limited resources allow, to enhance access on priority routes e.g. those promoted, connected to visitor hubs and for access for all.' Increasing severe weather events and visitor usage is undoubtedly affecting the condition of rights of way, and impacting on their maintenance'.
 - 2.10** Since the March 2025 the Authority has undertaken activities, both on our own and in partnership, that assist in meeting our welcoming place ambitions. The summary below updates Members on the activities we have focused our resources on since March 2025.
- 3. Progress since March 2025**
- 3.1** As reported to this Committee in March 2025 the Authority undertakes activities, both on our own and in partnership, that assist in delivering our welcoming place ambitions. However, following the organisational changes in 2025 and 2026 capacity for these activities including seeking external funding for future engagement projects is much reduced.

- 3.2 Priority routes within the NP** - 291 routes/sections continue to be checked and maintained by Rangers and volunteers e.g. Miles without Stiles, Walks Around, FIPL concession routes, nationally and regionally promoted routes etc.
- 3.3 Data-informed Rangering** – Rangers have been working colleagues to develop app-based recording of ‘behaviour impact’ on the landscape e.g. litter, fly camping, illegal parking etc. Since, August 2025 9 Area Rangers have recorded 555 incidences/data points, which can be interrogated on the Authority mapping system. Future plans for 2026/27 involve rolling this out on Volunteer Ranger Patrols and using the data to analyse patterns and measure success of engagement tactics.
- 3.4 Defra Access for All** - Year 4 capital funding of £255k was received in October 2025 and January 2026 for removing barriers to access. Please see Appendix 1 for a summary of funded projects. A Changing Place at Trentabank Ranger Centre has been provided to complement the Changing Places at Millers Dale and Parsley Hay provided in previous years. Defra has given an indicative 2026/27 allocation of £255k. Separate reports on the 2025-26 delivery and the 2026/27 funding will be brought to Resources Committee in April.
- 3.5 Active Travel England** – the [Peak District Walking, Wheeling, Cycling, and Horse-riding Infrastructure Plan](#) has been published and work is on-going with Active Travel England and local partners on detailed feasibility and scheme development to improve access to the strategic network. Phase 2 funding is likely but not yet confirmed.
- 3.6 FiPL** has continued to fund the creation and subsequent management of new permissive paths and bridleways in the NP and is working with Natural England (NE) where appropriate to transfer their management to Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship. It has also funded the upgrade of numerous existing rights of way by replacing stiles with gates along a route and surface improvements e.g. resurfacing of approx. 1km of the Longdendale Trail and part of the Derwent Valley Heritage Trail.
- 3.7 Area Management pilot** – in November 2025 the PDNPA produced a draft Area Management Plan for Castleton and Mam Tor and shared with partners. This work links closely to the Tourism Charter also created this year.
- 3.8 Biennial Ease of Use survey** - a randomised 5% survey of the NP’s rights of way network has provided a pass rate of 85.64%. Signposting, waymarking, condition of the path, structures, and obstructions were surveyed by Rangers and Ranger volunteers using a field-based app. The Access Point monitoring app continues to be used by rangers to record the state of all access points to and on access land and its easy usage is helping to increase monitoring overall.
- 3.9 Fire Operations** – after a busy 2025 fire season, the Fire Operations Group (FOG) put on another successful 3-day FOG wildfire training course in Buxton, and were awarded a FIPL grant of £45,000 for wildfire Personal Protective Equipment and LANTRA-accredited wildfire training.
- 3.10 Environmental Quality Mark (EQM) Community Interest Company (CIC)** - the Authority has continued to support the EQM CIC which continues to deliver the PD EQM for the Authority. A further 7 PD businesses have likely to achieve the award this March (5 within the NP).
- 3.11 Volunteering** - The first full year of volunteering activity has been successfully delivered using all opportunities now accessible to the full pool of volunteers via a single page on BetterImpact. This includes the moving of the complete historic records of individual volunteer hours and joining dates. In addition:

3.11.1 Welcome Volunteer programme for National Park Centres (NPCs) - alongside a pilot of Mobile Information Events (MIE) in key locations, was developed and delivered in summer 2025, with expansion planned into 2026. Further initiatives were developed over winter 2025, including the new PPCV Peak Pathways programme, youth engagement project targeting 18–26-year-olds, and the creation of entry-level volunteering opportunities within the Ranger team.

3.11.2 Access for All projects have benefited from the use of volunteers in designing and delivering. This includes Ranger volunteers and a scheme by PPCV to enhance accessibility at Brunts Barn. A proportion of this will be captured by the volunteer statistics above. The Defra access funding has also provided for equipment to support the activities of volunteers. This includes all-terrain wheelchairs, an e-cargo bike and e-bikes for use on the trails, and a mobile ramp and pop-up loo.

3.11.3 The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) - funded the People of the Peaks project in partnership with the PDF has entered its development phase looking at cultural heritage volunteering opportunities that can be implemented in any delivery programme. The project has a specific goal to diversify the heritage volunteer cohort and expand the volunteering opportunities. This project is working with Peak District Mosaic and the Youth Impact Collective. In addition, a successful programme with Moors for the Future Partnership (MFFP) was delivered, including sphagnum moss planting, dip well surveying, and use of the Bogtastic van.

3.11.4 Mileage/ travel expense claims for all volunteers across the Authority were introduced for the first time.

3.11.5 Volunteer statistics from April 2025 to January 2026 - total volunteers recorded on BetterImpact 1,804 (14% higher than 2024/25). Total hrs 66,951 across all projects (8.5% higher than 2024/25). 28 welcome volunteer train for June or 571 hours/95 days to date.

3.11.6 FiPL encourages and supports the use of volunteers in delivering projects. Whilst some of this volunteering is captured in the statistics above e.g. where PPCV have been involved, volunteers associated with other organisations e.g. Steel Valley Project, Wildlife Trusts, smaller less formal community groups and individuals are additional.

3.12 Access Unlimited Coalition – An expression of interest has been developed for the next steps towards a £10 million NHLF Grant led by Access Unlimited to expand the project across the UK. Project Tomorrow Stewards would be the third iteration of Generation Green. Progress has been paused as the Youth Hostel Association has withdrawn as lead partner. The coalition is considering next steps.

3.13 Ambassador Schools - a unique project delivered by the Authority launched in 2022 and currently includes 24 schools (Primary and secondary), both within the NP and within 30 minutes travel time of the boundary. The project aims to support schools and communities to build lasting relationships with the NP, and promote the benefits of outdoor learning and connection to nature. Funding secured through the PDF has enabled delivery of focused activity this year, including delivering in-school assemblies and workshops; circulating termly newsletters with information and support for outdoor learning; building and supporting a network of like-minded schools; and maintaining an informative website with relevant and useful teaching resources for teachers to use within school. Please See [PD Ambassador Schools: PDNP](#).

- 3.14 Landscape Discovery Centre** at Longdendale - the school visit programme was fully booked, stretching to reach increased income targets in the new externally funded project model and engaging over 4,000 young people, largely from urban communities and target audiences to the north and west of the NP. Comments from teachers have been very appreciative of the ongoing provision of the service: "*We're so glad the visits can continue. We love visiting the centre and working with the brilliant staff*". Officers have also been able to bring education expertise to other projects, including FiPL and Championing National Parks for Everyone, as well as delivering at Sheffield Outdoor Learning Conference. Proposals for the next four years are to be presented to Members through a separate report to this same meeting.
- 3.15 Moorland Discovery Centre** school visit programme - continued delivery of A level Carbon and Water programme excels in promoting an in-depth understanding of the NP's special qualities. It provides opportunities for 16–18-year-olds to connect with the moorland landscape with many of the students carrying out A level projects based on moorland carbon and water data. Pupils were made aware of the impact of tourism. Detailed information on all different species of NP flora and fauna is provided. Examples of feedback include *'It was the first time most of the group had been to the Peaks, so it was brilliant to have them in the landscape experiencing the landscape for the first time'*.
- 3.16 FiPL** has supported 14 farms to deliver educational visits across the NP and immediate surroundings for schools, community groups. Significantly visits are tailored for those with special educational needs. Two farms focus on the latter with weekly activities for the young people providing them with an element of work training in addition to education. For the first time FiPL has funded residential stays for 176 school children from deprived areas of Sheffield at Thornbridge Outdoors including a farm visit, nature session, dark skies event and outdoor activities.
- 3.17 Junior Rangers** - has continued in the Goyt valley under leadership of the Rangers, but otherwise ended with reduction of engagement capacity.
- 3.18 Youth Impact Collective** - has assigned core roles including Chair, Co-Chair, Project Leads for Nature and Welcoming Place. Core role members are now organising meeting programmes and agendas. Recent events have included collaborating with MFFP on fire awareness campaigns and inputting into the UK Community Fund Expression of Interest, aiming to expand and embed youth voice across National Parks UK wide. Animo Leadership is running coaching and leadership development sessions for group members, funded by American Express. Please see Appendix 2.
- 3.19 Championing National Parks for Everyone** – lead by Peak District Mosaic the main activity ends March 2026 with a final project end date of December 2026. 32 'Community Champions' from culturally and ethnically diverse communities have received training, developing skills, confidence and awareness of the benefits of NPs. All Champions have led their own event, providing inspiring opportunities for 370 participants from their own communities to experience and enjoy the NP, most for the first time. 13 events for local community organisations, enabling 320 people from diverse and under-represented communities to enjoy the beauty, and health and wellbeing benefits, of the NP have been delivered. A key project outcome is addressing low representation of people from diverse backgrounds in the environmental sector, and ongoing training and signposting to career and volunteering opportunities, for those involved in the project are being provided. There will also be an Evaluation by the University of Derby.
- 3.20 National Parks UK and the Protected Landscapes Partnership** – there has been

joint working on creating a shared vision for belonging in our National Parks. Community group support examples include: Dal Kular Black Writer in residence, please see [Peak District Residencing – Black Nature in Residence](#);

3.21 Community Projects: Peak District Nature Prescriptions - in collaboration with the RSPB this was relaunched in May 2025. PDF funding provided 500 extra copies enabling 19 new Healthcare/Support Professionals (14 organisations) and 4 PDNPA volunteers to be trained in delivery (Derbyshire, South Yorkshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire, including 7 Blythe House Hospice staff (1st Hospice in England to use Nature Prescriptions)). Reduced Authority core funding for community projects means that the project contact is now the RSPB. Two monthly **Dementia Friendly Health Walks** are now volunteer led, in collaboration with MHA Communities Peaks and Dales and Still Waters, Buxton. A celebration event was held in February for Volunteers, Participants, Staff and Group Leaders. The walks will continue under Ranger oversight.

3.22 Landscapes Unlocked project in partnership with the PDF secured external funding to secure and catalogue the PDNPA's unique image archive dating from the inception of the NP. An exhibition will form part of this work, to be hosted by the Buxton International Festival July 2026, then held in the Bakewell Centre for 12 months. This will bring new insights into past PD landscapes to a public audience.

3.23 Derbyshire Archaeology Day had its largest ever audience in January 2026 (over 460 tickets sold) and 3,000 copies of Archaeology & Conservation in Derbyshire and the PD magazine are being freely distributed to libraries, centres and other outlets throughout the year.

3.24 The Authority Plan 2023-28 enabling delivery aim sets out actions that will assist in the delivery of the Authority's essential business. **Objective B (Access):** To achieve timescales and follow processes for the statutory functions under Countryside and Rights of Way Act and Town and Country Planning Act includes the following essential business actions:

3.24.1 Supporting the statutory functions of the Local Access Forum so that it continues to operate effectively as the statutory adviser on access and recreation within the NP. The Forum meets formally three times a year.

3.24.2 Identify, maintain and enhance access to Access Land. The monitoring app continues to be used by rangers to record the state of all access points to open access land and for repairs to be undertaken, including upgrading stiles with gates wherever possible.

3 Recommendation

1. To note progress in delivering to the Peak District National Park Management Plan 2023-28 and Authority Plan Welcoming Place aim and targets.

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. These projects and activities fall within the Authority's statutory purposes. 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 NPMP will enable appropriate scrutiny and safeguard legal compliance.

b. Financial

Activities in the early years of the Authority Plan and NPMP 2023-28 had resources identified to deliver them. Further organisational change during 2025/26 has again included a reduction in core funded engagement capacity which will impact on the ability to develop and manage externally-funded engagement projects. Some level of financial support from the Authority will still be required as many funders require a cash or in-kind contribution and many do not contribute to overhead costs. Current and proposed contributions to externally funded Authority priority projects will be kept under review. As the revised structure and three-year Defra settlement are fully implemented the Authority's "Welcoming Place" activities will need to be kept under review.

c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan

The activities described in this report contribute to a number of our policies and legal obligations:

- The NPMP and Authority Plan as described in para 2.2. above.
- The Authority Plan 2023–28 Enabling delivery Aim: The Authority is inspiring, pioneering and enabling in delivering the National Park vision; Objective B (Access): To achieve timescales and follow processes for the statutory functions under Countryside and Rights of Way Act and Town and Country Planning Act.

d. Risk Management

The main risk to delivering the Welcoming Place aim is resources for the Authority (organisational change, further reductions for engagement capacity, reducing revenue budget), key partners and the wider economy. Recent organisational changes have severely reduced the breadth and depth of capacity to connect with communities, and provide services where all are inspired to enjoy, care for and connect to the special qualities which restricts capacity to deliver Welcoming Place initiatives going forward. Identified risks include maintaining partnerships and networks, the impacts of closing educational visit sites at Macclesfield Forest and potentially LDC at Longshaw, loss of capacity to obtain external funding for future Community engagement, Health and Well-being, Junior Rangers and Ambassador Schools activities.

e. Net Zero

Climate change and its impacts feature in all engagement activities. A connection to the place is encouraged as research shows this leads to positive pro-environmental behaviours. Engagement activities highlight good practice and encourage personal responsibility to take positive action. A focus on reaching out and engaging with communities that do not traditionally work with the Authority; deepen the knowledge and understanding of those that do in order to encourage connection to the place and responsible pro-environmental behaviours, including sustainable transport use. Whilst this work will continue under the new model activities will be less.

f. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The delivery of the Welcoming Place aim speaks directly to the ambition of ensuring equity of access (physical and intellectual) to the NP. The Authority's Equality Plan will need to be reviewed taking account of the Diverse Audience Plan.

6. Background papers (not previously published)

None.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Access for All Project Funding Update.

Appendix 2 - Youth Impact Collective Update.

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