

ACCESS CAPITAL FUNDING (SAS)

1. Purpose

1.1 The report provides an update on Defra Access Capital funding and the Access for All programme. For 2026/27, the funding available to the Peak District is approximately £255,899 and indications are that it will continue at this level over the following two years. The funding is for capital infrastructure improvements for inclusive access.

1.2 Members are asked to delegate acceptance of this funding to the Head of Assets & Enterprise in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer.

2. Context

2.1 The Defra Access for All Programme commenced in November 2022. Grant funding of £287,000 over 3 years was approved at the September 2022 Authority meeting (Min 81/22). In April 2025, approval was given by the Programme and Resources Committee (Min 15/24) to accept and spend an additional year of funding of up to £350,000 up to March 2026. The funding was allocated as follows

- Year 1: 2022/23 - £131,164.81
- Year 3: 2024/25 - £155,847.91
- Year 4: 2025/26 - £255,899.00

2.2 The full amount of funding allocated has been spent in each of the years. No funding was received in Year 2. Details of the delivery in 2022/23 was reported to Programme and Resources Committee in April 2023 as part of the Welcoming Place Aim Overview (Min 18/23). The delivery for 2024/25 was reported to Programme and Resources Committee in April 2025 and forms part of the update to the Welcoming Place report to that meeting (Min 17/24). In March 2026, an update was provided to the Authority meeting as part of the Welcoming Place report.

3. Proposals

3.1 The funding is for capital expenditure only. This could cover equipment, facilities, routes, signage, interpretation, filming, mapping, and design. It could also include external professional fees and for the capitalisation of staff time where directly attributable to the creation or acquisition of an asset. No revenue funding has been made available for the appointment of project officers or for administration and other general overhead costs.

3.2 Expenditure would be allocated in accordance with the principles set out by Defra and the objectives of the Authority and to meet the Authority's standing orders. Expenditure in excess of £5k (excluding VAT) would be subject to the receipt of quotes or full tenders in accordance with the Authority's standing orders. However, an exemption to procurement standing orders would be required where works to provide for accessibility improvements are undertaken by a Highway Authority on their assets (rather than by external contractors following a tender process) as such works are part of a common undertaking. Where this is an option, this would be undertaken in accordance with a Service Level Agreement.

3.3 The Peak District Local Access Forum and disability groups will continue to be involved in the infrastructure improvements, accompanied by close working with Highway Authorities, land owners and managers, and communities. Joint working with the other National Parks for the combined ambition to develop and promote the accessibility offer in Protected Landscapes also continues.

3.4 The acceptance of the Access Capital funding would be by way of an uplift to the Defra core grant agreement and would be subject to the terms of the core grant agreement and the requirements of the framework for this funding. Previously, there have been additional funds

identified, as a result of underspend by other Protected Landscapes. For this eventuality, delegation of the acceptance of funding up to £350,000 for each of the 3 years is sought.

3.5 The Chair of this committee has been consulted on and confirms approval to apply, accept, and spend this funding.

4. Recommendations:

4.1 That acceptance of the Access Capital funding of up to £350,000 for each of the years 2026/27, 2027/28, and 2028/29 (total £1,050,000) is approved. Approval of the terms of funding be delegated to the Head of Assets and Enterprise in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer.

4.2 That approval be granted to incur expenditure relating to the Access Capital programme of up to £350,000 in each of the years 2026/27, 2027/28, and 2028/29, pursuant to Part 3, C3.(c), subject to compliance with the Contract Procedure Rules and Standing Orders.

4.3 That approval be granted to exempt Standing Orders Part 2 (Contract Procedure Rules), pursuant to paragraph 13.1.1 of Standing Order CP13 in respect of the provision by Highway Authorities of works, services, and supplies as a common undertaking.

4.4 That authority be delegated to the Authority Solicitor to enter into and determine the terms and conditions of all legal documentation required relating to this Programme in the best interests of the Authority.

4.5 That this Project be monitored by the Resources Committee or such other group as may be appointed with the same remit.

5. Corporate Implications

a) Legal –

i) 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 Programme progresses.

b) Financial - Funding would relate to capital expenditure only. Works would need to have been completed or items purchased and delivered by end of March in each of the three years, if the allocation is to be met. Any monies not spent by this time would be subject to a clawback provision.

c) National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan - the funding would meet the Management Plan's outcome of a Welcoming Place where all are inspired to enjoy, care for and connect to its special qualities by improving access so that everyone can experience its special qualities, including those with limited mobility, and to build up the confidence of those who do not feel able to visit.

d) Risk Management - There are three risks:

(i) Programme Design & Spend – There is no flexibility on year spend. The funding would need to be spent within the financial year or returned to Defra.

(ii) Delivery – the funding is for capital expenditure only. The continuing ability to handle significant project expenditure relating to infrastructure improvements remains important in

order to meet grant and contractual conditions and in relation to the statutory functions of the Authority for Access and Rights of Way and Planning.

(iii) Reputation - There is a reputational risk of not delivering access improvements, resulting from any delays to the approval/receipt of the funding.

e) Net Zero - The work on active travel and a plan for walking, wheeling, cycling, and horse-riding provides a mechanism for the Authority to engage with visitors to the National Park regarding issues associated with climate change and for engagement with actions to protect its assets. The funding will not directly contribute to carbon net zero targets. The Authority recognises that for some people options are more limited but would not seek to promote unsustainable transport decisions

f) Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion - The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 have been met in the consideration of actions and the Authority will continue to have regard to its duties under the Act to address inequalities in its visitor and audience profile.

6. Background papers (not previously published)

None

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Defra Access for All - 2025/26

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

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Responsible Officer, Job Title

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