



A CHANGING PICTURE

Reporting on the National Park Authority's work in 2017/8 and plans going forward

IF YOU'VE been following our progress for some time, you will know that the North York Moors National Park Authority has seen some significant changes over the past few years.

In our Annual report of August 2012, we reported that cuts to our central Government funding would amount to around 35%, and that difficult decisions had been made with regards to our priorities and services. The Authority became a smaller organisation; we still delivered some incredibly positive work, but against a backdrop of uncertainty and change.

Six years down the line, the picture has evolved considerably. We have been successful in boosting our income from a variety of different sources, the most significant of these being bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Historic England. As a result, our budget for 2018/19 is now higher than ever, but by necessity, concentrated on funded projects.

Time to celebrate

Applying for grants is a competitive business and success is never certain. The applications alone require many hours of work from many people, so those we do secure are celebrated. Grants allow us to carry out some of our most exciting and engaging work; from rediscovering our industrial heritage, to protecting the beautiful turtle dove and restoring the habitat of the freshwater pearl mussel. Each grant awarded will support a number of staff over the duration of the project, often allowing new members of staff to be recruited.

Between April 2017 and April 2018, we recruited more than 40 new members of staff. Some of this was natural turnover; however, we finished 2017/18 with 123 full-time equivalent staff members, a net increase of 16.

It's wonderful to welcome new faces to the Authority, and the skills and experience that they bring, but such a shift in how our work is funded is not without its challenges. In 2011, it was the core parts of the organisation which reduced in size, and now these same areas are under significant pressure to support and help deliver our ever-increasing externally-funded work.

As well as special projects, core parts of the Authority are also achieving some



FANTASTIC: Helping hands from across the generations have helped make this an award-winning year for Volunteering in the Park



fantastic things in their own right. In particular, Volunteering and Education, areas highlighted as priorities in our Business Plan, have had an extremely successful year and have both been recognised with awards (see Looking Back). We are now working with more young people than we have ever done, with many coming from the 10% most deprived areas surrounding the park. Initiatives such as the Explorer Club and Young Rangers are fostering a love for volunteering and for the great outdoors in children as young as four. It's our hope that many of these individuals will remain involved with the Authority and its work throughout their lives, acting as

ambassadors for the National Park in their own communities.

Securing the future of the North York Moors has been a bit of a theme for the 2017/18 year, and in November, we saw the launch of the National Park Trust. The Trust is independent to the National Park Authority, with its own panel of trustees, but is supported by us and shares our own commitment to conserve the landscape and wildlife of the area, while helping people to enjoy and learn about it. Indeed, a huge part of the Trust's work is focussed on ensuring the North York Moors can be enjoyed for many generations to come.

Fracking statement

It's difficult to think about the past year and not mention fracking. In January, after learning about planned exploration for shale gas reserves in the area, we published our position statement, affirming that the Authority's policy is to oppose hydraulic fracturing taking place within the National Park. We understand entirely that this is an opinion not shared by all; however, there are many areas to frack outside the Park, and it is in line with the original position of national Government, which made a commitment to rule out fracking from taking place within National Parks and other particularly sensitive areas.

The Authority, in its mineral planning capacity, is working with City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council to produce a minerals and waste joint plan, set to be adopted by the end of 2018. The plan will set out new planning policies for minerals across all three areas, which will guide decisions on planning applications up to 2030. An update on this, and further explanation of our policy on fracking, will be published in the November edition of our Moors Messenger publication, so do keep an eye out for that.

Local Plan

We will also be publishing our own Local Plan for public consultation shortly and this will cover planning policies on all other types of development in the National Park over the next 15 years. It is therefore a very important document, as once adopted, it will guide the decisions of the Authority on all planning applications over this period. The draft Plan will be available for consultation from the end of July for 11 weeks, so please look out for it on our website and in local libraries.

LOOKING BACK - 2017 to 2018

- All our woodland targets were achieved and exceeded in 2017/18. This includes replacing 128.4 hectares of plantation (target 125 hectares) with native broadleaved species.
- Our 2017/18 community grant scheme helped 20 small-scale projects in communities including Cold Kirby, Hinderwell, Kildale and Sinnington. The awards totalled £42,080.
- Ninety percent of respondents who completed the recent planning satisfaction survey were 'fairly satisfied' or 'very satisfied'.
- Our education service reached 19,840 people. This includes Explorer Club and youth groups, as well as through schools and events. Satisfaction from evaluation forms is rated at 100%.



- The North York Moors scooped the top prize in two of only four categories at the National Parks UK Volunteer Awards 2017. The 'Young Person of the Year' category was won by Caitlin McCauley, aged 19 from Richmond, North Yorkshire, following her summer of volunteering with the Education Team. The National Park Authority also came top in the 'Best Project' category with the Cleveland Way Adoption Scheme – an initiative that sees young families become custodians of their own stretch of the National Trail.



- For every day of 2017–2018, the equivalent of three weeks of volunteering took place in the National Park!
- The Land of Iron project officially launched its delivery phase on 18 March 2017. The programme will run until 31 March 2021 and currently has a total value of £4 million.
- The 'Moors and Valleys' Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC) was established in early 2018 as part of the Land of Iron project. Aimed at 8-16 year olds in the North York Moors and Teesside, this initiative has been very well received.

- Two community archaeology digs at Combs Wood and Goathland incline introduced a new type of volunteering to the National Park, which proved extremely popular.

- We secured a £275,000 grant from the Coastal Communities Fund to deliver the 'Moor to Sea' project on behalf of the North York Moors Rural Coastal Community Team. Covering the coastal strip from Saltburn to Cloughton, the project generates greater economic benefit through developing off-season breaks and promotes sustainable ways of travelling along the coast.

- Our £220,000 Destination Partnerships Moors and Dales project (working with Yorkshire Dales National Park, along with the Howardian Hills and Nidderdale Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), got underway. Part-funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, its objective is to boost rural tourism and activity includes the annual Dark Skies Festival – with events across the four protected landscapes attracting thousands of visitors.

- It was the fifth year of the Authority's Local Distinctiveness and Tourism Grant scheme, which offers grants to tourism businesses or organisations for projects that increase awareness of the North York Moors, use the area's local distinctiveness and ensure any increase in visitors is sustainable. We provided grant aid to 11 projects, including the expansion of Musicport on the Moors, a digital archive exhibition at The Hut in Goathland, and a bike repair hut at Dale Head Farm Tea Garden.

- A total of 64 Traditional Boundary Scheme Agreements were completed, resulting in 3.9 km of drystone wall restored and 4.4km of hedgerow restored or created.



- The Biffa Award funded project 'Restoring Freshwater Mussel Rivers in England' entered its third year. Activities included: Continued work with the Environment Agency to monitor water quality in the Esk; controlling Himalayan balsam along 15km of river; stabilising a 30 metre section of riverbank using bio-engineering techniques (willow posts, willow whips and brush); putting 23 farm agreements in place and improving farm infrastructure to help enhance water quality.

LOOKING FORWARD - 2018 to 2019

● The Dark Skies Festival 2018 ran from 9 to 25 February and was a roaring success. More than 50 events were held across the North York Moors, which over 2000 people attended. There was significant online, press, radio and TV coverage, and the only complaint received was that things booked up too quickly!



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● The Authority commissioned a report by the Rural Business Research Unit at Askham Bryan College, York, to provide an analysis of agriculture within the North York Moors National Park over the past 10 years. The report provides base line data that will be useful for guiding future farming policy within the Park.

● The Explorer Club, which works with families with children aged 4-14, received a special award from the Campaign for National Parks. The project, which aims to inspire families to love the great outdoors and protect special habitats was highly commended and received a £500 grant as part of the prestigious Park Protector Award. The award was presented at a reception in parliament on 11 October.

● The Cleveland Way was the subject of an episode of Countryfile, broadcast on 12 December 2017.

● February saw the launch of Operation Owl, a joint initiative to help reduce the number of illegal attacks on birds of prey in North Yorkshire.

● The Authority retained its customer service excellence award – being fully compliant with all 57 elements of the standard and showing best practice in 11 of these.

● At the time of writing, the Authority has 17 apprentices. We also have three graduate trainees, an undergraduate placement student and a series of (paid) interns and (unpaid) work placements. Since launching in 2002, more than 120 apprentices have been through our training programme. We remain very proud of our ability to provide employment, training and development opportunities for young people.

● As part of the Land of Iron project, large-scale building conservation work will be carried out on a number of historic sites, including Warren Moor Mine and bridges on the Rail Trail, in summer 2018.



© Paddy Chambers

● The exhibition space at the Moors Centre, Danby, is set to be overhauled in winter 2018/19 in time for a spring 2019. The exciting new displays will tell the Land of Iron story, enriching the experience of residents and existing visitors, and bringing new visitors to the Park. This will be complemented by a range of interpretation across various heritage sites in the National Park.

● Partnership work with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, North Yorkshire Moors Railway and Natural England to improve Fen Bog, an important and rare habitat in the Land of Iron, will begin in summer/autumn 2018, boosted by additional funding from the Woodsmith Mine Section 106 funding.

● We will undertake further research and analysis in order to develop a Future Farm Policy that proposes practical solutions for wildlife, farmers and the landscape of the National Park as a result of Brexit and National Policy changes.

● We will work with communities and coastal businesses to complete the 'Moor to Sea' project, delivering a range of initiatives to enhance the visitor experience in these picturesque villages, including showcasing artisan food producers and outlets, artists and craft makers. Building on the success of our previous Pink Sheep campaign, we will co-ordinate Sea the Sheep, a fun summer challenge where visitors will be encouraged to seek out sheep decorated with a seaside holiday theme and share their sightings on social media.

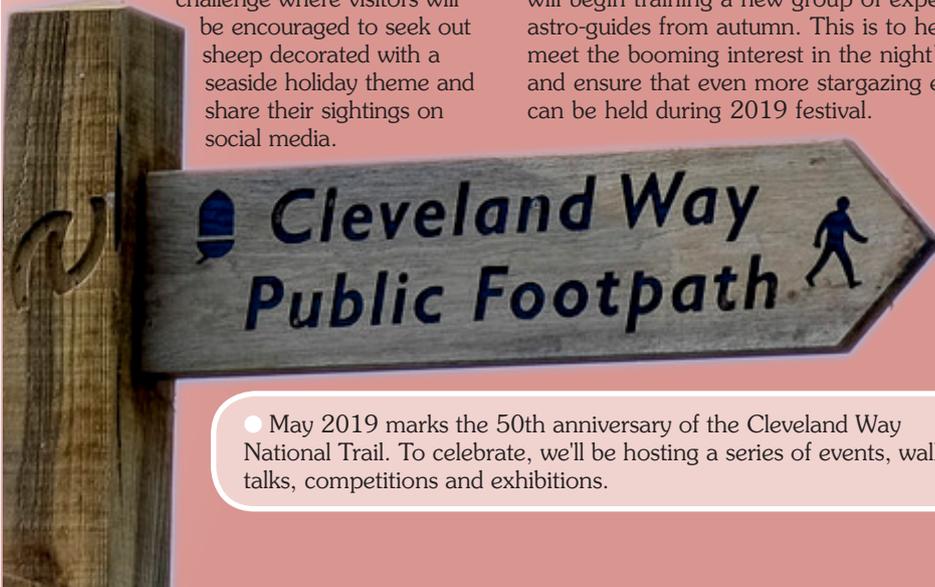
● We will continue to proactively engage with Defra Ministers and officials to demonstrate the Authority's experience of running farm schemes and seek to influence Defra on the design and delivery of a new national agri-environment scheme. Where appropriate, we will seek to participate in the testing, trialling and piloting of any new scheme.

● We will work in partnership with Welcome to Yorkshire to deliver our first fully-integrated destination marketing campaign, leading with 'Alive with Adventure'. Its objectives are to be engaging and inspirational, and, by highlighting our special qualities, to build awareness and raise the profile of the North York Moors to attract new audiences whilst retaining existing visitors.

● The stage two application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Ryevitalise Landscape Partnership Scheme is set for final submission in October. If successful, the project will deliver a four-year programme from spring 2019. The total value of the project, which aims to reconnect people with beauty, rich wildlife and tranquillity of the River Rye, is £2.8 million.

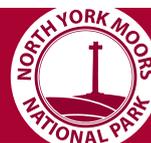
● The Dark Skies Festival will be back in February, this time in partnership with the Yorkshire Dales, Northumberland and South Downs National Parks. Our Starmakers initiative, which launched earlier this year, will begin training a new group of expert astro-guides from autumn. This is to help meet the booming interest in the night's sky and ensure that even more stargazing events can be held during 2019 festival.

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● May 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the Cleveland Way National Trail. To celebrate, we'll be hosting a series of events, walks, talks, competitions and exhibitions.

Judging our performance



We set high standards of customer service and performance that are monitored through a variety of measures – including those set out below. The suite of measures reported on was reviewed in 2018 to fit with the Authority’s new Business Plan.

FUNCTION	INDICATOR	Result 2017/18	COMMENTS
Providing an excellent service	Amount spent on grants to individuals, communities and businesses in the Park	£353,346	The Authority continues to be strongly committed to offering grants for conservation and community initiatives
	Footpaths and other Public rights of way that are ‘easy to use’	80%	Target met - result is from November 2016. Next survey due later this year
Running an effective and efficient organisation	Planning applications determined in a timely manner	79%	The combined target of 80% was narrowly missed, despite meeting the individual targets for ‘major’, ‘minor’ and ‘other’ planning applications
	Number of free public toilets supported by NPA	17	Includes eight public toilets in NPA carparks/ Visitor Centres, and financial support to a further nine
	Number of volunteer days provided	13,207*	The target is to reach 23,000 volunteer days per year by 2021. *Figure represents current estimate
	Costs of Corporate Services as a % of gross costs	5%	This meets the Authority’s target of 5%
	Phone/email answering by a real person	The Authority continues to answer all phone calls in person during office hours	
	Invoices paid within 30 days	98%	Target 100%
	Planning appeals won	80%	In the UK the average % planning appeals won by all authorities is 67%

Actual 2017/18

Between April 2017 and March 2018 the Authority spent £6.41 million. The majority of this income came from Government with additional funding from external partners such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, Natural England and English Heritage. We also receive money from Section 106 planning agreements, particularly the one associated with the new Woodsmith Potash Mine, and earn additional income from fees and charges.

Please note that these figures have yet to be audited and may change.

