

# North York Moors National Park Authority

29 June 2026

## Item 19, Chief Executive's report

### 1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the CEO's activities since the last NPA and to identify key and emerging issues for Members to be aware of.

### 2. National issues and developments

- 2.1 The English Devolution and Community Act received Royal Assent in April. The Act, expands regional devolution across England, introducing Strategic Authorities (including Mayoral Authorities) into law with further devolved powers. Whilst the main elements of the Act have little direct bearing on the North York Moors area, the Act extends a General Power of Competence to National Park Authorities. In principle, this enables NPAs to "do anything that individuals generally may do" as long as it is legally permissible. Unlike local authorities, NPAs have previously operated under a functional power of competence tying our activities to our statutory purposes. The rationale behind the extension is to give NPAs more freedom to innovate and generate diversified income both inside and outside the National Park boundaries. NYMNPA already has a diversified income basis and it is debatable whether the new powers will in practice create new opportunities. Nonetheless, the changes, which have long been called for by (mostly) southern NPAs create some expectation around the activities that we might undertake to underpin our financial resilience.
- 2.2 The government has formally responded to the Nuclear Regulatory Review published in late 2025. In its response, government confirmed that it will legislate to constrain the Protected Landscapes Duty by clarifying that developers of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) are not required to pay compensation in order to comply with the PL Duty. Whilst this decision protects the current statute of the Duty, concerns remain over how government will proceed to legislate. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act of 2023 which introduced the PL Duty also conferred powers, via Secondary Legislation, on Ministers to bring forward secondary legislation to support interpretation of the Duty which we would welcome.
- 2.3 Government has published an independent review into upland communities in England. The review was led by social entrepreneur, Dr Hilary Cottam, whose previous research focussed on communities and social design. The [report](#) sets out 19 insights, many of which have relevance to the work of protected landscapes, including how we work with farmers, the role of common land, community access to services, tourism and housing. The next steps will see a dedicated Defra team working in Dartmoor to identify and put in place collaborative structural changes to

address the review's findings. Dr Cottam visited the North York Moors as part of her research.

- 2.4 The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee issued a call for evidence on wildfire as part of a wider investigation into climate change. The North York Moors NPA responded providing evidence based on our experience of the Fylingdales Wildfire and drawing from our consultation response on changes to the grass and heather burning regulations in 2025. The EFRA Committee has also recently launched a call for evidence on upland farming which NPE will respond to.
- 2.5 Government has announced a 12-week consultation on the introduction of a new [Natural History GCSE](#). The consultation focusses on subject material and is an opportunity for National Parks to relate the history and role of National Parks in the delivery of course content.
- 2.6 National Parks England Board met on 9 June and approved updates to the governing documents of the company following a recent governance review. The changes are largely modest but create greater clarity with regard to the role and responsibilities of Directors.

### **3. Authority updates**

- 3.1 Government has confirmed that an additional £3.2 million of funding has been awarded to the NYMNPA to undertake restoration activities on Fylingdales Moor. The funding, which comes from the Peatland grant scheme, will cover the costs of peat restoration following last year's wildfire and the reinstatement of 17km of firebreaks on the moor. The Authority is harnessing s106 contributions from the Woodsmith and Boulby mines to provide the required 15% match funding and will act as contractor for all works. A tender exercise is currently underway at the time of writing. In letters to the York and North Yorkshire Mayor and North Yorkshire Council, the Defra Minister, Mary Creagh, confirmed that having explored options, there was not a viable route for government to compensate farmers and other businesses for financial losses incurred during the wildfire.
- 3.2 Separate reports on the Fylingdales wildfire are expected to be published prior to the NPA meeting. The first report provides a debrief from the North Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) which has been pivotal to ensure multi-agency co-ordination through the wildfire and overseeing recovery and restoration. The second report from North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides a full debrief on the wildfire from a firefighting perspective. With the LRF's work now substantively concluded, the North York Moors NPA will take ownership of any residual activities, which relate largely to restoration and recovery.
- 3.3 The York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority has confirmed that an additional £500,000 of funding will be made available to the four protected landscapes in North Yorkshire to extend the successful pilot of a new Natural Health Service in the region. The project, spearheaded by the North York Moors Trust, seeks to strengthen awareness of nature prescriptions amongst social practitioners and care providers and augment the unique role that protected landscapes can play in this region in tackling physical and mental ill-health. An event in the Yorkshire Dales

recently showcased the evaluation findings of the pilot. The NYMNPAs will act as host for this additional funding with the Trust being separately awarded funding to support project management of further works.

- 3.4 Following the completion of construction and fit out works, we are working with teams to undertake the decant of materials and equipment from our Sawmill Lane depot to the new depot on Riccal Drive. Members have had an opportunity to view the depot prior to the move and we aim to conclude the move over the next couple of weeks. Construction of the new headquarters building has now commenced, with OGL retained as contractors for the works. A full report was provided to FRASC in May in line with the recommendations adopted by Members in January and March at NPA
- 3.5 The NPA, as lead organisation, has submitted a final suite of documents to Natural England that concludes the pilot phase of the Linking Levisham Landscape Recovery pilot. One of several pilot projects funded under Defra's ELM Landscape Recovery tier, the pilot work established habitat and other baselines for the project area, drew up land management plans for the recovery of the wider landscape and developed a site access plan to improve access to the area. Subject to assurance by NE of successful completion of the required deliverables, the partners will be invited to negotiate a full implementation of the project which is expected to last for 20 years. Other partners in the project are Forestry England, North Yorkshire Moors Railway, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO). All partners have worked closely with and secured the required support of tenant farmers and graziers for the project.
- 3.6 The York and North Yorkshire combined authority recently confirmed £150,000 of funding has been allocated in the final phase of its Vibrant and Sustainable High Streets fund to the Heart of Helmsley project. The project, led by the Howardian Hills National Landscape is a regeneration initiative aimed at making Helmsley more accessible and welcoming. The NPA is a partner in the project.
- 3.7 The North York Moors Management Plan has reached its fourth anniversary and in line with the relevant legislation must be reviewed every five years. Following a helpful evening seminar with Members in 2025, Directors recently met to discuss how to approach the forthcoming review, to ensure we reflect changes in guidance and policy affecting Management Plans and ensure that the process is adequately resourced.

#### **4. Stakeholder engagement**

- 4.1 Officers and staff from NPP hosted a recent visit by the Managing Director and colleagues from catering and events company, Levy, illustrating how the funding provided for the Grubs Up project is empowering communities and improving habitats for wildlife.
- 4.2 On behalf of the NPA I recently attended the first meeting of a new North Yorkshire Fire Operations Group. Set up by the Chief Fire Officers, the forum takes the learnings from last year's Fylingdales wildfire by bringing together environmental

and land management stakeholders to strengthen wildfire preparedness and resilience.

- 4.3 The NPA hosted a visit by Defra Director, Edward Barker to Fylingdales Moor. As well as supporting the case for funding a key objective of the visit was to highlight the need for wider co-ordinating across government departments on wildfire.
- 4.4 The NPA attended and co-sponsored the recent conference held at Ripon Cathedral by the Ripon Rural Forum on the subject of affordable housing conference. Featuring keynote addresses from David Skaith, Lord Best and our own Patrick James, the conference considered the critical issues to enabling more affordable housing to meet the needs of communities across the region.

## **5. Financial and staffing implications**

- 5.1 N/A

## **6. Contribution to National Park Management Plan**

- 6.1 N/A

## **7. Legal and sustainability implications**

- 7.1 N/A

## **8. Recommendation**

- 8.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

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