North York Moors National Park Authority

Finance, Risk and Audit Standards Committee

1 September 2026

Item 18, Health and Safety Update

1. Purpose of the report

1.1 To update Members on health and safety activity since the February FRASC report.

2. Background

2.1 This quarterly report forms part of the Authority's formal reporting of Health and Safety matters to Members. Sharing this information enables Members to fulfil their scrutiny function in this key area.

3. Sickness absence

3.1 In the year to date, there have been 234 days of sickness absence. 43% of these days were for longer term absence (defined as over 20 days).

3.2 The Authority's target is 2% absence rate based on the Office for National Statistics. At the end of quarter 1, the absence rate was 2.77% inclusive of long-term sickness absence. Excluding long-term sickness this rate is 0.49%. This demonstrates that our short-term absence is well managed.

3.3 There are members of staff who have had long term absence issues in year. All are being actively managed by the respective line managers with HR and Occupational Health support where necessary. Two of these remains absent at 19th August 2026.

3.4 The top four reasons for absence are, Respiratory Illness (31%), Surgery or Medical Procedures (17%), Mental Health (10%) and Gastrointestinal Illness (10%).

3.5 We have updated the tools available to officers who are experiencing poor mental health to ensure we are providing adequate support.

4. Accidents, incidents and near misses

4.1 Between 1 April and 30 June, there were 6 accidents, 5 incidents and 1 near miss reported.

4.2 Of the above there are a couple of accidents and incidents that are worth bringing to Members attention. The first accident was rotten timber on a bridge which gave way beneath a walker causing injury. On the same day reported, the ranger team went to inspect and closed the bridge for use with signs added the next day. An emergency closure legal order was put on it within days and a full repair conducted before the emergency closure ran out. The bridge had been reviewed as part of annual checks and some rot noted, but at that stage it was not expected that part of it would give way. Two other accidents of note at Danby Lodge also had quick solutions, a burn from a coffee cup with quick action to ensure that the hotter drinks have more heat prevention and an unfortunate trip which led to a cut to the arm on the corner of the car park sign, with the corners now having additional protection.

4.3 The first incident involved a volunteer who fell ill whilst on a task and collapsed. This is not the first time that we have had a volunteer collapse on a task, either because the task or weather conditions were too much for the individual concerned. Since these occurrences, there has been more emphasis on what the task involves and a reiteration to people to consider their health in the context of tasks, for their own wellbeing but also that of the group they are with and those leading the tasks. The second incident involved a missing child at Danby Lodge. Staff reacted quickly with radios, an organised search was conducted, the mother was looked after and the child eventually located. The reaction and co-ordination of staff to this incident was excellent.

4.4 Following the fire safety report at the Old Vicarage a number of actions are now complete. There are however still actions to carry out in the next quarter:

- Fire door review. We are currently arranging for an experienced listed building contractor to come out to review our current doors for fire resistance and potential solutions. Finding a date has been challenging but hope to have an action plan for this area in due course.

- The improved central recording that will provide consistency across sites will be one of the first roles for the new health and safety post (see section 5).

- Fire marshall training is now completed and we have a cohort of 16 trained staff at the Old Vicarage. Rotas are now required to ensure wardens are on site each day in the working week.

- There are still some storage arrangements to resolve and tenant accommodation solutions still being assessed.

4.5 Fire safety reports have now been carried out for Danby Lodge and Sutton Bank which have also covered additional health and safety reviews. These have highlighted a few areas of risk for review and an initial assessment has identified a number of actions which Visitor Centre Managers are undertaking. Many of these are already complete or underway.

- Consistent approach to recording checks and information and ensuring information is available to hand.

- Improved contractor management on site.

- Consideration of EVAC chair for the first floor in the event that the lift is out of action in the event of fire.

- DSEAR assessments to be developed for both sites for use of calor gas on site.

- Improved storage in electrical rooms to prevent fireload and a review of fireload risk across the premises.

- Zone plans to be updated to show electrical cut off points.
- Consider location of the solar batteries and actions to improve safety and access.
- Fire doors to be reviewed and checks conducted on their fire resistance as they are older doors that are not officially marked as fire resistant. Any gaps in doors on fire routes to be fitted with intumescent seals where required.
- Some additional signage to make clearer the fire exit routes from particular locations in the building.
- Monthly inspections of emergency lighting to be undertaken plus lithium battery specific fire extinguishers required for trampers.
- Hazardous substances to be reviewed as to what quantities held, consistency of what is used at centres and COSHH assessments developed for their use.
- Asbestos management plan and register to be developed and available on site. Signage where required and staff awareness of locations.
- Water flushing should be weekly and recorded with two trained to carry out.
- Development of traffic management (including pedestrian walkways where applicable) and winter plans.
- At Sutton Bank – the fire assembly point to be moved to a location away from the car park area.

A further update will be brought to November FRASC on progress for all key properties.

5. Health and Safety Action Plan 2026/27

5.1 It has been identified that the Authority needs additional resource dedicated to health and safety, in particular to support the co-ordination, record management and site checks, which ensure that everything we need to do is being completed. This assurance role will form part of the new Human Resources and Health and Safety Officer role which has recently been recruited and will commence in post in September. Key initial tasks will be the co-ordination of central and consistent record keeping for assurance and automation of recording of data and tasks. It is a key role to continue focus on delivery of actions relating to health and safety.

5.2 The plan for 2026/27 can be found below.

Areas of focus	Progress
Including health, safety and wellbeing as part of annual performance management.	This will be delivered as part of the review of the appraisal process to ensure that a health and safety culture is included in the responsibilities of all members of staff.
Ensure training requirements are picked up in the training matrix.	A considerable amount of training has already been undertaken where required, but the matrix to allow budget control and ensuring training is carried out against legislative and risk assessment requirements will form part of the new role.
Deliver against the actions identified from the fire safety reports across all sites.	A number of actions have been identified across out properties. Details can be found in the report. Implementing the findings in the report will be one of the key deliverables in 2026/27 and considerable progress has already been made.
Basic requirements for an appropriate home office set-up. Staff audit their home office arrangements to ensure compliance with Health and Safety Executive Guidance.	All staff working from home should review their working set up and confirm that they are happy with their working environment. If not, officers are able to work from the office if the set-up is not appropriate.
Tree baseline surveys and action plan.	The tree policy and process review has been completed in 2026/27 and tree surveys will be carried out by a contractor this year to provide a baseline. Teams will need to develop an action plan and carry out works in line with that.
Centralised reporting development.	A central SharePoint site has been developed, but the process of reporting and updating actions needs to be updated, including making it easier to update through use of automation. This needs to be a one-stop shop for all health and safety reporting, actions and reports. This includes a log of all required checks, evidence of reports being carried out. It will work in conjunction with Concerto, the NYC system, which is used to record work carried out under our NYC maintenance contract which carries out statutory works and checks. The new role with assistance in automation from IT will develop this in the second part of the year.
New headquarters build	Ensuring health and safety compliance in the Helmsley headquarters and depot. The depot has been reviewed with a few actions which have been carried out to bring it into operation. The new headquarters is being assessed as the build continues – but has been designed with health and safety requirements in mind.

6. Financial and staffing implications

6.1 There are no significant additional financial or staff issues related to the contents of this report. An additional financial provision has been approved in the budget to undertake additional health and safety works including fire safety reports and follow up actions and tree survey works.

7. Contribution to National Park Management Plan

7.1 The risk register highlights the key risks to the Authority and actions to help mitigate. This is therefore an important governance tool in managing delivery of the Management Plan outcomes.

8. Legal and sustainability implications

8.1 Health and safety encompasses many legal requirements. The report covers fire safety reviews which by law should be carried out every 5 years which has been completed with a number of actions to follow up. Training requirements are also covered in the report, some of which are legal requirements. There is a need to ensure more centralised reporting to ensure we are legally compliant and carrying out the checks in a timely way. From a property perspective, our maintenance contract with NYC ensures that we comply with legal requirements for property checks and reviews. But health and safety recommendations can sometimes be an enhanced version of the law with additional checks and risks mitigation.

9. Recommendation

8.1 That Members note the contents of this report

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Background documents to this report