

North York Moors National Park Authority

28 September 2026

Item 8, Review of National Park Management Plan

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To set out a proposed approach, timeline and early considerations relating to the review of the North York Moors National Park management plan.
- 1.2 To seek approval for additional expenditure to engage experienced project management support to assist Officers in undertaking the review process.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The current North York Moors management plan was adopted by the National Park Authority (NPA) in 2022 following an extensive review and engagement process. By law, National Park Authorities, which have statutory responsibility for the preparation and publication of management plans are required to review the Plan every five years. Since the current plan was adopted in July 2022, a review needs to commence by the summer of 2027. The current North York Moors management plan is available at <https://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/management-plan>
- 2.2 The importance of management plans as the key strategic and policy framework for the National Park area cannot be understated. Management plans set out the vision and strategy for delivering the National Park's statutory purposes¹. They shape the policies that guide the NPA's approach to National Park management. They define the special qualities of the area which carry material weight as planning and wider policy considerations.
- 2.3 Whilst management plans are not binding on other agencies, relevant authorities should be guided by the plan's content in achieving their statutory duty under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 to seek to further National Parks' statutory purposes. They are encouraged by government to participate in the preparation and review of management plans.
- 2.4 The current management plan marked a shift in approach from this Authority in the development and content of the plan. The review process sought to engage key stakeholders and partners from the outset in a series of officer-led thematic groups. The final plan was considerably more concise than previous North York Moors management plans and concentrated on 24 specific objectives that could be actioned by the NPA and partners over the five-year review cycle. Members supported officers through a Management Plan Working Group, which reported to NPA.

¹ As a reminder, these are: to conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife & cultural heritage and to promotes opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of [the area's] special qualities.

3. Scope of the review and proposed approach

- 3.1 Members held an initial discussion on the management plan at an evening seminar in July 2025, which was reported to NPA in September last year². Senior Leadership Team (SLT) met in June to undertake initial scoping of the review, taking into account the drivers for change, structure and format of the plan, an assessment of what worked well in the last review and some initial views on contents. We have also consulted members of the management plan Partnership Delivery Group. This comprises key statutory agencies and other key partners that have responsibility for delivering the current management plan and oversee progress on its delivery.
- 3.2 The concise length of the current management plan and its focus on actionable objectives are seen as key strengths, making the plan digestible and meaningful to staff and partners. Whilst in hindsight several objectives in the current plan have proven challenging to deliver, hard to measure or lacked specificity, Officers recommend the review maintains this approach of a short, focussed and action-oriented plan.
- 3.3 A number of policy and regulatory changes have happened since the last review in 2022, which need to be factored into this review process. Government guidance published in 2024 on the preparation of management plans sets out a helpful framework for all protected landscapes and a reviewed plan should seek to follow this format. The introduction of the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) has also provided a framework of targets and outcomes that must be incorporated as part of the review (our current plan incorporates them as interim targets). The plan must also take account of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) affecting the area of the National Park and requirement to comply with the biodiversity duty brought in under the Environment Act 2021.
- 3.4 The discussion with Members in 2025 indicated that the outcomes within the current management plan were broadly the key areas that a review should tackle. However, Members identified the growing challenge that climate change is posing in terms of landscape adaptation. With wildfire directly impacting on the North York Moors as a consequence of climate change, Officers believe this subject will be even more central to discussions. Related to this, National Park Authorities are required to produce a climate adaptation management plan by 2028 as part of the Third National Adaptation Programme. Whilst Officers believe this should be undertaken as a separate process, it must read across to actions included in the Management Plan.
- 3.5 The expectation on protected landscapes to lead the charge in delivering the commitment adopted by the UK government to conserve 30 percent of land for nature by 2030, is also likely to be a focal point for the review.
- 3.6 All of the above points to a more significant review than a mere tweaking of wording in the current plan. As a result, Officers believe a full review should be undertaken.

² https://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0036/185499/Full-Public-NPA-Agenda-September-2025.pdf - page=33

Our aim is to conclude this review within 15 months, concluding with adoption of a revised management plan at NPA in December 2027.

- 3.7 The management plan should be underpinned with evidence on the current state of the North York Moors. To support this, Officers are in the process of compiling an updated State of the National Park report that will summarise the condition of the National Park and provide baseline information that can allow evaluation over time. We expect to include this as part of the review process. Work underway across all 44 protected landscapes through the Landscape Observatory should also provide up to date habitat information that can be used as part of the evidence base.

4. Review governance and stakeholder engagement

- 4.1 Officers intend to create an internal project group, led by the CEO, that will manage the review process. At this time, Officers do not propose to create a specific Member-led Management Plan working party, but instead to use our existing governance mechanisms, notably our Forums and EDI group to provide input. It is also proposed that the Chairs of the Forums, EDI group and Authority Chair meet periodically with the CEO as project sponsor. NPA is required to consider and approve the final plan and it is therefore incumbent on Officers, via the CEO, that Members are informed of progress and have the opportunity to input. The CEO intends to use his quarterly report to NPA to update and provide assurance to Members on progress and give an opportunity for discussion.
- 4.2 A stakeholder engagement plan will be drawn up identifying key stakeholder communities and individuals who should be engaged as part of the review process. Early discussion with the Partnership Delivery Group indicates that partners are keen to adopt a flexible approach, engaging with them individually and/or thematically as appropriate. Some partners, such as Natural England and local authorities, have various interests in the National Park and therefore the Management Plan. We intend to use the Partnership Delivery Group as a periodic sounding board on progress with the Plan review and to ensure key partners are engaged in the process but substantive engagement is likely to take place with them individually.
- 4.3 An important part of engagement is with local communities, businesses and land managers. We intend to harness the new Community Forums as a means of securing the widest possible community input. The North York Moors Tourism Network provides an ability to engage with c.700 tourism businesses in the National Park. Our Estate Reps Forum enables us to engage directly with landowners, managers and their representative organisations. Formal, open consultation on the draft plan is required as part of the review process and will be undertaken towards the end of the drafting process.
- 4.4 We also intend to ensure staff and volunteers have opportunities to input into the process and this will be designed-in as part of the stakeholder engagement plan. It is also critical that the voices of underserved communities and young people are heard in developing the plan. Engagement with the North York Moors Youth Voice will therefore be important.

5. Financial and staffing implications

- 5.1 Any review of a National Park management plan requires the time and commitment of Officers to conduct stakeholder engagement, draft the plan, oversee formal consultation and finalise for publication. Given that the timing of the review will coincide with the ongoing review of the local development plan, Officers intend to bring in additional consultancy support to provide overall project management and support to the CEO as project sponsor.
- 5.2 Conclusion of the review will also require the completion of a strategic environment assessment, Habitats Regulations assessment and Equality Impact assessment. In addition, resources will need to be made available to ensure impactful publication and communications of the review. At this stage, officers envisage that costs within this financial year can be covered within approved budgets and there is no immediate additional financial ask.

6. Contribution to National Park Management Plan

- 6.1 The review of the management plan will lead to the publication of a revised National Park Management Plan, likely to contain new outcomes, objectives and actions for the NPA and partners.

7. Legal and sustainability implications

- 7.1 The Environment Act 1995 Section 66 sets out the statutory requirements on NPAs requiring them to undertake reviews of their management plan at intervals of not less than five years. In adhering to section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, NPAs and other relevant authorities are encouraged to take account of the management plan to demonstrate how they are seeking to further National Park purposes.
- 7.2 As the key strategic framework for policies that affect the National Park as an area, the Management Plan review has significant implications for the sustainability of the North York Moors and the work of the National Park Authority.
- 7.3 The National Park Authority is required to notify Natural England of its intention to review the management plan as well as constituent local authorities.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 That Members note the intention to commence a full review of the North York Moors management plan.
- 8.2 That Members approve the proposed governance arrangements set out in paragraph 4.1

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