North York Moors National Park Authority

Finance, Risk and Audit Standards Committee

16 November 2026

Item 16, Health and Safety update

1. Purpose of the report

1.1 To update Members on health and safety activity since the September 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 At the end of quarter two, there were 441.5 days of sickness absence. 69% 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 2, the absence rate was 3.17% inclusive of long-term sickness absence. Excluding long-term sickness this rate is 0.97%. This demonstrates that our short-term absence is well managed.

3.3 All long-term absences are being actively managed by the respective line managers with HR and Occupational Health support where necessary. Two of these remain absent as at 28 October 2026, with 4 having returned to work successfully.

3.4 The top four reasons for absence are, respiratory illness (30%), gastrointestinal illness (18%), mental health (154%) and Neurological (10%).

4. Accidents, incidents and near misses

4.1 Between 1 July and 30 September, there were 9 accidents, 3 incidents and 3 near misses reported.

4.2 Most of the accidents refer to minor trips, cuts and bike falls which are not deemed to be preventable incidents. There are two accidents however which are worth drawing Members' attention to. The first is a trip on a rake and timber by a member of staff in our compound. Whilst the injury was minor, it highlights the important of storing our equipment and materials in a way which does not compromise health and safety and ensures safe access to these areas. It is a reminder for staff to ensure areas are kept clear and ordered to avoid incidents such as these. The other accident relates to the steps outside Danby Lodge where a member of the public fell backwards on the step. Whilst there were no serious injuries from the incident, it

does highlight the lack of a handrail at that location for additional support so one will be installed along with works to paving when the centre is closed in January.

4.3 The incidents related to a confrontation at Sutton Bank with a member of the public, a lost child incident at Danby Lodge and the collapse of the flagpole in a storm at Sutton Bank. The confrontation highlights a risk for some staff members. It has been noted by the health and safety group that conflict management training hasn't been undertaken for some time, so this is being arranged for staff in public facing roles. The lost child protocol was enabled again, and this worked well with the exception of an issue with some radios cutting out. The radio issue has been resolved and a number of new radios will be ordered. Finally, on the 30 August, a lightning strike in the night resulted in the collapse of the flagpole. It highlights the risk of thunderstorms in exposed locations for both staff and visitors and our need to watch weather warnings and respond accordingly.

4.4 Just one of the near misses is worth highlighting. The head of a hammer mell came off whilst hammering in a fence post during a volunteering task. The head of the mell missed a volunteer's head by inches. The mell looked like it had had a repair at some point in the past. This near miss could have resulted in serious injury. Following the incident, all equipment at Danby Lodge has been reviewed by the ranger team, with replacement equipment ordered for any deemed to be past its best. A message has also been reiterated that equipment should be replaced rather than repaired – and to ask staff and volunteers to ensure that all tools in use are up to the job. All of the volunteer kit in the southern depot will also be reviewed by a volunteer with extensive experience. The principles of replacing equipment when it reaches its use by date needs to be instilled to ensure that tools being used by staff and volunteers are fit for purpose.

4.5 Following the fire safety report at the Old Vicarage a number of actions are now complete. There are still some 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.

- Minor storage arrangements and tenant accommodation solutions still being assessed.

4.6 Further progress on health and safety in our buildings include the following: -

- Capital funding has been allocated to works on the Botton depot including an additional fire escape at the rear of the building, replacement of a wooden

staircase on an exit route and a fire door to replace a thin wooden door in poor condition.

- 14 members of staff are now trained as fire wardens at the Old Vicarage. In addition, further first aid training sessions have taken place to skill up staff.
- Further works at the Old Vicarage building have been limited. With just a few months left in the current headquarters, major investment is not recommended and instead additional checks and monitoring will take place where required. There have been some amendments to working practices however, with working from height stopped, tools and equipment updated and documentation being kept up to date.
- The visitor centres have continued to address the issues raised in their fire / health and safety reviews with the following being delivered: -
  - Consistent approach to compliance check recording.
  - Review of permit to work forms and a systematic workplace evaluation (DSEAR assessment) for the use of LPG.
  - Lithium fire extinguishers at Sutton Bank for trampers.
  - Refreshed site fire plans.
  - Relocation of the fire muster point to a site with reduced vehicle traffic risk.
  - New bollards to prevent vehicles entering pedestrian areas.
- The new depot has had some additional training around use of the heating and ventilation systems. A dust extractor has been purchased to remove wood dust in particular whilst woodworking takes place in the workshops at the rear of the building. There may need to be some additional sealing work to the concrete floor which is under review.

5. Health and Safety Action Plan 2026/27

5.1 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 been undertaken. A new training policy has been approved by SLT. One of the first tasks for the new health and safety role will be to pull together the training matrix to ensure training is carried out against legislative and risk assessment requirements and monitored.
Deliver against the actions identified from the fire safety reports across all sites.	A number of actions have been identified across our properties. Details can be found in the Health and Safety updates through the year. Implementing the key findings in the report is one of the main 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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