

North York Moors National Park Authority

Finance, Risk, Audit and Standards Committee

1 September 2026

Item 15, Property update

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To update Members on the progress on the construction of the new HQ at Riccal Drive and other property matters.

2. The New Headquarters

- 2.1 Construction started on 1 June as planned and is currently within budget and on time. Changes to the steel construction programme were made to facilitate the redesign of the front entrance to allow for sliding doors, but they do not currently affect the final completion date.
- 2.2 All planning permissions following the submission of the pre-commencement condition applications have been received.
- 2.3 Over the last three months, all of the under-ground works including the foundations and attenuation tanks have been completed and construction above ground is quickly taking shape. The steel frame was completed on 31 July and the concrete stairs are now in, ready for the construction of the first-floor plate and roof which are due to be completed by the end of August.
- 2.4 Final decisions on the internal fit-out and external works are being made as the contractor progresses through the build stages. We are reviewing some of the decisions made two or more years ago to test that they remain right for the Authority. There is a formal contractual process to request a cost and design change.
- 2.5 In response to questions raised by the EDI Group, a formal request has been submitted to change the opening mechanism of the front doors from manual to sliding with automatic sensors. The design changes of the steel frame and doors have been costed at £6.7k. The Authority has made the decision to accept and instruct this adjustment and will look to fund this from within the original budget envelope. Should there be a requirement for contingency to be used for this additional works in future, this will be highlighted for Members.
- 2.6 In addition to the external doors, a request for assisted opening internal doors within the ground floor lobby area splitting the public and private areas has also been submitted to ensure better security as well as access. We have been given an indicative cost of £10-£15k and await the formal cost adjustment.
- 2.7 Other changes that came from the staff workshops after the original spec was submitted have been sent to the contactors to be costed, for example additional

sockets for charging the drones, swift and bat boxes to be integrated into the cladding on each gable end, upgrading the cycling store for EV bikes and additional changing cubicles. We also propose to transfer the responsibility of installing the gates and posts from the Rangers to the Contractors. Originally proposed as a cost saving, the proposed change will help to alleviate pressure on the Ranger team. It is expected that funds will be found within the current budgets for minor changes.

- 2.8 We continue to work with the contractors to design a dark sky friendly environment. This requires the Authority to 'opt out' of the British Standards for car park lighting, and instead to have an exemplar design. This is a part of the planning application favoured by North Yorkshire Council. Incidentally this is also the approach taken at the new Depot to light the car parking and external storage areas.
- 2.9 The new staff project team has met twice and meetings are held monthly. The active liaison between directorate reps and their teams has enable questions to be raised and answered more quickly and the feedback has been positive.
- 2.10 An all-staff workshop was held on 22 July. After a detailed update, staff were invited to participate in looking at four different aspects of the build:
 - i. what IT equipment would they like to see in the new office?
 - ii. what equipment would encourage collaborative working?
 - iii. what furniture would they like in the break-out, garden and kitchen areas?
 - iv. how do they want to use the space, eg desk booking?

A good number of staff took part on the day with many of those unable to attend, submitting questions and comments in advance. The response was overwhelmingly constructive. Lots of queries were addressed and reasons for design choices explained. The session generated some good debates and solutions found which have been incorporated into the design. Staff engagement continues to strengthen since the event with a further event planned for Members and Officers later in September.

A site visit has been arranged on Friday 28 August at 10am for staff and Members to see the construction first hand and to walk around the skeleton construction of the new office.

3. The new depot

- 3.1 Staff and volunteers have now moved the majority of their kit and equipment across from Sawmill Lane. Staff from across the authority supported the Rangers by attending a session to help load and unload their kit. A technical handover from the contractors showing how more technical aspects of the depot function has also been conducted. Sawmill Lane will be closed once the move is completed.
- 3.2 Following an initial meeting on 23 April, staff representing all of the principal user groups for the external areas of the building, continue to discuss how they want to

use the space with the woodland team proposing some additional infrastructure for the storage of tree saplings.

- 3.3 The depot at Sawmill Lane remains on the market with McBeath Property Consultancy inviting offers around £260k. There have been a number of viewings and interested parties.

4. Other property update

- 4.1 The process of selling The Old Vicarage will commence shortly with an update on this expected at November FRASC.
- 4.2 As part of moving staff at Sawmill Lane to the Old Vicarage, a review of capacity was undertaken. This indicates that on the busiest days, the capacity at the Old Vicarage will just be reached and capacity on the majority of days will be manageable. The new headquarters will operate on a hot desk basis, so we are taking the opportunity to move towards this cultural change whilst at the Old Vicarage. Therefore, we have introduced a desk, vehicle and meeting room booking system (Deskbird) which went live on the 1 July, which will also help manage capacity pressures exacerbated by the closure of the second floor offices.
- 4.3 Fire safety reviews have been carried out at the Old Vicarage, Sutton Bank, Danby Lodge and Botton Depot in line with legal requirements. These are covered in the Health and Safety reports on the May and September 2026 FRAS Committee agenda.
- 4.4 The capital programme this year includes works on the Danby Lodge overflow car park and refurbishment of two toilet blocks. Planning permission has recently been granted for the overflow car park, and procurement is now underway for contractors to bid for this work with the intention to carry it out over the autumn/winter.
- 4.5 We await the Q1 results from the ANPR trial introduced at Newton-Under-Roseberry to help combat non-compliance rates at the car park. The trial continues to run and data collected.

5. Financial and staffing implications

- 5.1 The table below illustrates the latest expected financial outturn position for the project against the approved budget without contingency from the January Full Authority meeting.

Approved budget excluding contingency	£3,562,000	(Including contingency £4,048,000)
Value engineered savings pre-contract sign	-£48,238	Various small savings pre-contract signing
Additional cost of steels, fuel etc	£40,867	As previously reported to Members
EDI and security improvements to external doors and two internal doors	£21,700	Sliding doors and internal security between public and private areas.
Changing cubicles	£1,600	-
Solar canopy for EV - futureproofing	£5,311	-
Current budget expectation	£3,583,240	-
Potential contingency call	£21,240	-

- 5.2 Members will already be aware of the additional costs of steels and fuel that was added at the point of contract signing. At the time Officers said that they would look to find this within the original budget if possible but that it may be a call on contingency. The final contract signing included a number of savings made through the final value engineering exercises, and as such these additional costs are fully offset within the original budget.
- 5.3 Since the build has commenced, we have worked with staff in both the project team and all staff sessions. In this, we have identified some additional areas that staff are keen to explore. This includes enhancing the access and security of the office by including sliding doors at the main entrance (as identified by the EDI Group) and automated internal doors from the lobby. The estimated cost of this is included in the table above at £21.7k. This is also partly offset by earlier savings, but it is anticipated that we will need to use £14.3k of contingency to fund this.
- 5.4 Two other additional considerations have also been included. These are :-
- Changing cubicles for additional privacy/spaces in the changing room area at a cost of £1.6k.
 - Building in the ground infrastructure in the car park to facilitate a solar canopy for the EV fleet. If we take the decision now, the infrastructure can be built in at a cost of £5.3k. If we don't do this work now, then in future we would need to dig up the car park to put the infrastructure in which would cost more and be additional disruption. The funding of the solar canopy itself will be a separate proposal.
- 5.5 Other ideas put forward by staff which are being reviewed include :-
- integrated swift and bat boxes in the design. To put integrated boxes into the build, this will cost £4.8k. This is the ideal solution but if boxes are not integrated the cost will be approximately £1.6k.
 - upgrade the specification of the cycling storage to include EV charging points.
 - review of the biosecurity washdown facilities for conservation staff.

An update will be brought to Members in November on these items under consideration, or earlier if the cost of these exceeds the £50k limit for additional items requiring contingency funds. In considering these options, Officer will be looking to ensure they add value, whether that be financially, ethically or furthering our national park purposes.

- 5.6 The current call on contingency funding is £21,240. Work will continue to offset the additional cost within the project, but on the basis of current expectations, it is anticipated that this will be contingency funding.

6. Financial and Staffing implications

- 6.1 The report covers a number of aspects of cultural change for staff which will need to be closely managed.

7. Contribution to National Park Management Plan

- 7.1 Ensuring the working environment is fit for purpose for an ambitious organisation is one of four pillars of our organisational strategy.

8. Legal and sustainability implications

- 8.1 The report covers the fire safety reviews which are legal requirements carried out every 5 years.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

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