

North York Moors National Park Authority

21 March 2016

Devolution

<p>1. Purpose of the Report</p>
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| <p>1.1 To update Members on local proposals for Devolution and give them an opportunity to comment.</p> |
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2. Since the General Election in May 2015 there has been increased impetus behind the issue of devolution in England. Two Government departments – Treasury and Communities and Local Government – have been negotiating a series of devolution deals with a wide range of local authorities. Some of these have been agreed though not yet implemented and in other cases negotiations have stalled.
- 2.1 Officers updated Members on the issues as they affected the North York Moors at the Members Seminar on 28 October 2015. At that point the outcome of the discussions in Yorkshire was not known and several different options had been discussed. Since then an agreement over the Teesside area has been reached (though not implemented) but the Yorkshire position still remains very uncertain.
- 2.3 This Authority was not involved in any way with the negotiation of the Tees Valley devolution deal and has subsequently been assured it will not affect the Authority's statutory planning duties. The Chief Executive is however continuing to ask for a more detailed assurance on this point since on the face of it the proposed mayoral powers (which do in some respects cover planning) extend over the entire Redcar and Cleveland area which of course includes part of the National Park. He has been assured the Authority will have the opportunity to input to the draft implementing regulation and that in any event this should exclude the National Park area from the planning regime of the Mayor. With respect to Yorkshire, both the National Park Authorities are now included in the discussions on potential devolution deals.
- 2.4 Many of the issues being debated do not directly impact on the National Park Authorities' functions. Moreover, there are still several possible different outcomes to the discussions each with its own set of possible governance arrangements and powers. Possibly the most likely outcome is for there to be a mayor and combined authority over the East Riding/York/North Yorkshire area. According to the public proposition put forward by authorities in this area last autumn (A Devolution Proposition for the City of York, North Yorkshire and East Riding <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/31125/Devolution-and-North-Yorkshire>) this would devolve certain national funding streams to this area together with a limited number of powers in return for the integration of existing individual local authority powers into a Mayoral/Combined Authority system. Officers are currently seeking clarification on how exactly this system and its wider proposals would impact on the NPAs. It has been pointed out that any system needs to recognise the existence of the NPAs statutory planning powers and the fact that these operate outside the area of any of the proposed Yorkshire options (because both Parks extend beyond Yorkshire).

- 2.5 There is also a 'Greater Yorkshire' proposal (The Devolution Proposal for Greater Yorkshire, encompassing East, North and West Yorkshire <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/31125/Devolution-and-North-Yorkshire>): this does not cover South Yorkshire but also includes proposals affecting planning which could impact on the National Parks.
- 2.6 An informal and highly strategic Spatial Plan has recently been produced for the North Yorkshire/East Riding/York area with the cooperation of all the planning authorities, including the two NPAs. Under the Devolution proposals for this area it is not intended to change this into a statutory plan which means that the local plans of the Districts, Unitaries and National Park Authorities will retain their existing statutory status. A longer term 'spatial framework' is also proposed with a 30 year horizon. This would also be non-statutory, though it would shape strategic thinking and prioritisation over this period of time. Officers are currently working to ensure that the NPAs have the appropriate voice in any future governance arrangements to allow them to protect the integrity of their own strategic planning powers in the interests of the National Parks, while accepting that, if not imposed nationally, a broad strategic sub-regional Plan is socially, economically and environmentally helpful.
- 2.7 There are issues and opportunities beyond planning however. The devolution proposition for the City of York, North Yorkshire and East Riding covers a wide variety of issues including management of public sector assets, the creation of development corporations, health and social care, devolution of some Defra functions and transport infrastructure. The latter two could be of immediate interest to the National Parks in terms of improved delivery and ensuring environmentally appropriate proposals, respectively.
- 2.8 Officers will give a further, verbal, update at the meeting.

3. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

- 3.1 Current staff levels make it difficult for the Authority to be fully involved in this work, but greater input is now critical. There are no direct financial consequences.

4. **Contribution to National Park Management Plan**

- 4.1 Not applicable

5. **Legal Implications**

- 5.1 These are discussed in the report in relation to planning.

<h3>6. Recommendation</h3>

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| <p>6.1 Members comment on the issues raised.</p> |
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Contact Officer
Andy Wilson
Chief Executive (National Park Officer)
Tel No 01439 772700