

North York Moors National Park Authority

30 September 2019

Associate Groups

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the progress made in engaging with a wide range of Associate Volunteering Groups. This paper is one of a planned series of informatives as preparation for the next Business Plan.

2. What is an Associate Group?

- 2.1 An Associate Group is a group that undertakes voluntary work within the North York Moors National Park in support of National Park purposes, with material support from the NPA and in line with its values and objectives. We currently have 13 highly diverse Associate Groups. Associate Groups bring benefits in terms of increased capacity, profile, visibility, community, and engagement with physical and mental health disability groups.
- 2.2 The idea of Associate Groups came from an increasing realisation that we cannot do everything that we want with volunteers in the National Park through the National Park Authority alone. Although there is still room for growth in certain volunteering roles (particularly administration), due to the capacity of existing staff, volunteering within the NPA necessarily will have a ceiling, albeit one that we have raised with the use of volunteer Task Day Leaders to assist line managers in their work. By working together and sharing resources with like-minded organisations, we can achieve our aims more effectively. There is a huge appetite within the NPA and within other organisations to do this. A small material contribution from the NPA in terms of cash, skills, training or equipment can unleash a high volume of work which otherwise would not have happened or would not have been directed towards projects in the Management Plan.
- 2.3 In order to affect this, a new role has been created within the Volunteering Team to manage these Associate Group relationships. The Partnerships and Development Officer also works with Task Day Leaders.
- 2.4 Associate groups operate under a system which has been agreed and approved by our insurers, health and safety and legal advisors. Each Associate Group is required to:
- have its own insurance
 - be responsible for the health and safety of all volunteers on the tasks that they lead
 - risk assess their work tasks and implement appropriate control measures
 - Ensure a qualified first aider is present at all times.

3. List of our Associate Groups

The associate groups can be broadly divided into three categories:

3.1 Community Volunteering Groups

Village volunteer Hubs are an excellent way of enthusing residents with a sense of community spirit and increasing opportunities for social engagement. There is an

opportunity to expand the model of village volunteer Hubs throughout the National Park.

- 3.1.1. **Thornton-le-Dale Village Hub.** This group now has 160 plus volunteers and is still growing. They have taken on the maintenance and management of a number of projects within the village through consultation with the NPA and Ryedale District Council. The projects have included management of the pond and surrounding greenspace, upgrading the path network around the pond, creating a performance area for musicians and school groups, installing a pond dipping area for children, creation of interpretive nature trails, construction of hedgehog houses, painting railings.

Spin-offs have included the formation of a village choir and an elderly people's luncheon group. The Hub has also entered Thornton le Dale for Yorkshire in Bloom.

The NPA has contributed to the success and growth of the Hub by training 6 of their members as Associate Group Leaders, who lead members of the Hub on volunteer tasks in the village. The NPA also provide staff and volunteer support to some tasks.

- 3.1.2 **Skinningrove Hub.** Building on the success of the Thornton le Dale Hub, the model will be exported to other villages in and around the National Park, starting with Skinningrove. Initial meetings have involved the Partnerships and Development Officer, two of the leaders from the Thornton le Dale Hub and seven community leaders from Skinningrove, who are enthusiastic and active members of the villages or towns who are keen to make a difference to their communities, often through galvanising other members of the community to come together to take action. Skinningrove Hub is expected to launch by late 2019.

3.2 **Disabled Groups**

- 3.2.1 6 of our 13 Associate Groups offer support and training or residential housing for people with mental and physical disabilities. These groups have benefited through their associate group status with us by taking part in volunteer tasks throughout the National Park. This has created opportunities for greater social engagement and wider experiences of the National Park.
- 3.2.2 Camphill Village Trust, Esk Valley Camphill Community, Ampleforth Plus and EasiWorks are the main Associate Groups working with the NPA. These groups provide varying support services for people with a range of disabilities. By becoming Associate Groups, they have access to support from NPA staff in planning and managing volunteering; additional volunteering resource; and NPA tools and equipment. The additional volunteering opportunities also provide a wider range of experiences and learning all over the National Park.

More than 3,000 trees and wildlife friendly hedgerow shrubs have been planted at Park House Barns., Gilling East.

The Esk Valley Camphill Community regularly participate in volunteer tasks along the Cleveland Way and work alongside NYM Apprentices and other NYM Volunteers.

Community Champions from Camphill Village Trust have done litter picks at Saltwick Bay and will be trialling an easy access route at Rosedale Bank Top on 4 October.

Associate Group Leader training has been provided to 15 of the CVT staff and residents enabling them to lead volunteering tasks within the community.

The Volunteer Team has assisted Ampleforth Plus to recruit a new team of volunteers to work alongside (autistic and disabled young people).

National Park volunteers work alongside autistic and disabled young people on tasks, including footpath creation and maintenance, bird hide creation, pond formation,

shelter construction, fencing, horticulture, chocolate making, baking, pickling, and making preserves.

EasiWorks volunteers take part in Riverfly Monitoring, volunteering at visitor centres and gardening.

EasiWorks staff also delivered a "Working with people with autism and mental/physical disabilities" training session to NYM staff and NYM volunteer Task Day Leaders.

4. **Other Organisations**

4.1 **Scarborough Borough Council.** Their associate group status has resulted in a joint initiative along the Cinder Track. Volunteers from National Park and Scarborough Borough Council work together on habitat and ecological enhancement tasks, path maintenance, steps and other furniture along the Cinder Track. These tasks are led by NPA and SBC staff, with SBC volunteers who have been trained as Associate Group Leaders. There is the capacity to expand this work if SBC go ahead with a proposal to create a new Maintenance Ranger post for the Cinder Track.

4.2 **Mountain Rescue Teams**

The volunteering carried out by Scarborough & Ryedale and Cleveland Mountain Rescue Teams is included in our volunteering figures. The NPA provides a small annual grant to the Rescue Teams of £1,200 (SRMRT) and £500 (CMTR) from Park Services budgets. We also assist in ad hoc support such as help with use of vehicles. Runswick Bay Rescue Boat also receives £300 per year and the potential for approaching this organisation as an Associate Group is currently being discussed.

Officers will be recommending in the forthcoming budget round that the level of financial support to these groups is increased.

5. **Benefits to both Parties**

Benefits to the Authority:

- Increases our visibility through communities and villages in the National Park and showcases the work that we do
- Raises our profile with like-minded organisations, and promotes the opportunity for joint working
- More maintenance of PROW, village infrastructure and community facilities.
- Associate Groups are able to access some grant funding that the Authority cannot e.g. the Inspire grant offered by Stronger Communities to start up community volunteering initiatives in villages. Thornton le Dale received funding from this scheme.
- We can quantify the amount of time given by volunteers in these associate groups, and therefore the return on our input supporting and channelling them to do more that is a good fit to National Park purposes, giving us a better picture of the total amount of volunteering going on in the National Park which would have previously gone under the radar.
- More volunteering opportunities and experiences for our volunteers.
- Increases the status and effectiveness of the unofficial 'National Park Family'.

Benefits to the Associate Groups of their relationship with the National Park:

- Use of our tools for tasks

- Promotion of their tasks to NPA volunteers, particularly those who bring additional experience and skills
- Advice and support from NPA staff – particularly in managing H&S
- Access to training delivered by NPA staff and volunteers e.g. Task Day Leader Training Working with Volunteers training, My Volunteering database training
- Bi-annual catch ups with the Volunteering Team Partnership and Development Officer to review the partnership and share best practice.
- Probably moral support and encouragement and a good feeling from being in the ‘family’.

6. **Joint Working between Associate Groups**

The Partnerships and Development Officer encourages Associate Groups with common interests to work together. This has been particularly effective in enabling groups with disabilities to integrate with similar groups and in wider society.

7. **Statistics**

7.1 In 2017/18, before the allocation of any staff resource to Associate Groups, we worked only with the two Search and Rescue Teams (our support of these is financial only). Their volunteering contribution within the park was 3,892 days.

7.2 In 2018/19, following the appointment of the Partnerships and Development Officer, the number of Associate Groups rose to 11 and these groups accounted for 11,861 days of volunteering in the National Park.

Breakdown of Associate Group volunteering 2018/19

Associate Group	Days
Open Country	5
Quoits Club	20
Scarborough Borough Council	56
Cleveland Mountain Rescue	548
Scarborough and Ryedale Mountain Rescue	1,693
Thornton le Dale Village Hub	412
Autism Plus at Park House Barns	141
Easi Works	212
Beyond Boundaries	590
Esk Valley Camphill Community	6,528
Camphill Village Trust	1,656
	Total 11,861

As can be seen, there are two main areas of growth. One is in our work with disability groups. Not only can much volunteering be achieved through these channels, and in encouraging these groups to work together, but this also enables us to fulfil a role which is core to our beliefs. The other is that of bringing communities together under the banner of the National Park, whether they are rural communities inside the National Park or outlying townships in underprivileged areas that would greatly benefit from being part of a stronger community that the National Park can offer.

8. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

- 8.1 Core volunteering in the National Park is finite due to the finite capacity of staff to manage volunteers, but Associate Groups have the potential for a huge amount of growth given a small amount of additional resources.
- 8.2 We currently have one staff member who works with Associate Groups and Task Day Leaders but after only one year, this new role is already at capacity. To further explore the possibilities of Associate Groups, backed up by our model of Task Day Leaders, and to further develop what we do in the National Park through volunteering, further staff resources will be required. We already have a growing list of other organisations who could work with us to this end, but not the resources to be able to take them forward at the moment.

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

- 9.1 E9 – More conservation and environmental work undertaken in the National Park.
U7 – More engagement with people who are less able to visit and enjoy the National Park.
U16 – Provide more opportunities for volunteers to contribute to delivery of second purpose.
CR10 – Maintain excellent working relationships with key partner organisation to assist in the delivery of the Management Plan.

10. **Legal Implications**

- 10.1 None.

11. **Recommendation**

- 11.1 We ask Members to note and comment on the work that we are doing with Associate Groups.

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Background papers to this Report

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