

North York Moors National Park Authority

14 December 2020

Chief Executive Officer Update

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide members with an update on the CEO's activities since the last NPA and to identify key and emerging issues for members to be aware of.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 This report aims to provide members with an overview of my activities, thoughts and key priorities as your (relatively new) Chief Executive. It is not intended as a substantive item for discussion but I would welcome feedback from members on the value of this brief note.

3. Key Priorities in the First Two Months

- 3.1 My over-riding priority since starting at the National Park Authority has been to get to know the people and the place. Whilst the circumstances, particularly during the second period of 'lock-down' may not be ideal, thanks to the Management team I've been able to gain a substantial insight into the work of the Authority, spending 3 separate days with the Ranger teams across the National Park, with members of the conservation team and our planning department. I've also spent some time with our volunteers and visited both visitor centres.
- 3.2 Seeing the work of the Authority on the ground and in practice gives the best impression of the value we bring and I've been hugely impressed by the quality and commitment of our staff. To improve staff communications and engagement we have put in place a monthly staff briefing: a key benefit of new digital technology is the ability to connect efficiently with the greatest possible audience and feedback from our staff about these sessions has been very positive.
- 3.3 In addition to this I've also taken time to meet with key stakeholders who have an interest in the National Park: Forestry Commission/ Forestry England, National Trust, NYMA, Moorland Association and the newly formed North York Moors Shooting Association to name but a few. I've also met with a number of the large Estates – owners and managers – in view of the vital role they play in working in partnership with the Authority in the delivery of our National Park purposes.
- 3.4 This engagement, with our staff, Members and key stakeholders will remain a key priority over the coming months.

4. Ways of Working

- 4.1 The impact of Covid 19 is likely to be felt long after the pandemic is over. Our experience during the pandemic has highlighted the importance of social contact both in and out of work. But it has also shown how much can be achieved through remote working, massively supported by new digital technology. The expectations of those entering the workforce about work/life balance are changing. Bringing all these

things together we believe the time is right to look at the working practices of NYMNPAs with a view to adopting a more flexible home/office approach for the long-term. To this end I have initiated a review of our ways of working to look at how we can create the best working environment whilst improving our delivery of public services which remain paramount.

5. **The 'Big Picture'**

5.1 Though far from exclusive, the key issues on which I've focussed my attention over the last two months include:

- Green Recovery – the potential opportunities that recent announcements from the Prime Minister and SOS may mean for National Parks
- Spending review – at the time of writing, the outcome for 21/22 indicated an increase in funding available in National Parks and AONBs partly to support the delivery of new agricultural policy (see below)
- Landscapes Review – together with our National Park & AONB partners we await the Government's response to the Glover Review. This may not emerge before early 2021
- ELMS –this is the most significant piece of public policy for the farming sector since the 1970s and will have a major bearing on our work as a National Park.
- Devolution

6. **Budget**

6.1 Members will be asked to approve a proposed budget set out in the MTFs paper at the meeting. This is clearly a period of considerable uncertainty and our main objective has been to present a balanced budget proposal for the next financial year. Yet as an Executive team we are very mindful of the challenges that we will face as an Authority in subsequent years faced with a backdrop of pressure on public finances, cost inflation and competing demands for our activity and resources. A key priority working with my Senior Leadership Team will be to identify how best the Authority can navigate a successful path through these pressures as part of our long-term strategy.

7. **Management Plan**

7.1 Work has commenced on developing the next Management Plan for the North York Moors National Park. A small internal staff group has been established to steer the work and support the Management Plan Working Group. We are also coordinating with Northumberland National Park which is also in the process of reviewing its Management Plan. An update will be provided at the meeting.

8. **Communicating with Members**

8.1 From my discussions with members it is clear that you value a combination of formal and informal updating of our work, which enables you to be effective advocates. A number of recommendations are set out in an accompanying paper. In addition to this I'm keen to get to know all members on a one to one basis and whilst I've spoken to a good number of you since I started, I'm hopeful we can all speak before Christmas.

9. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

9.1 None.

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

10.1 Please identify how the subject matter of the report contributes to the delivery of the National Park Management Plan and include the relevant Policy Number from the Management Plan (where appropriate) together with reference to any of the 'Means to Achieve' that are relevant.

11. **Legal Implications**

11.1 None.

12. **Recommendation**

12.1 That Members note the contents of this report.

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