

North York Moors National Park Authority

22 March 2021

Item 12, Chief Executive 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. Management Plan

- 2.1 The process of external engagement on the next North York Moors Management Plan has commenced with both press coverage and social media stimulating interest in the exercise. The first meetings of the three officer-led thematic working groups to help develop the Plan have taken place and we will shortly meet with Parish Forums to get their initial input. We've had a fantastic early response to the Survey Monkey questionnaire with close to 200 responses within the first week alone. The Management Plan Working Group continues to oversee the process led by Patrick James.

3. Authority strategy and Business Plan

- 3.1 Concurrent with the Management Plan Directors and I have started to shape our initial thoughts on the Authority's Strategy and Business Plan from April 2022. I feel it's important that there's an effective bridge between the Management Plan for the National Park and the Authority's Business Plan to create a golden thread through which our priorities and measures of success are set. The purpose of the Strategy will be to identify our own ambitions over the next 3-5 years as an Authority and our external and corporate priorities. This is all the more important in a time of unprecedented change, competing demands and pressures on the Authority & National Parks to 'do more'.

4. National overview

- 4.1 Work at a national level has focussed on the following issues:

1. Landscapes Review – the government has yet to make a formal response to the Glover Review although Defra officials have been engaging with National Park Officers through NPE on the recommendations, including the proposal to create a new National Landscapes Service.
2. Farming in Protected Landscapes – At the time of writing there is still little detail on the shape, size and timing of the FiPL programme that was announced as part of the Agricultural Transition Plan in November. The programme, which is aimed at farmers in Protected Landscapes is due to start from April 2021. As well as the parameters of any scheme (including extent of local discretion) a key area of discussion is the extent to which

funding can be used to increase the administrative & officer capacity of National Parks & AONBs to deliver the new scheme

3. Covid Roadmap & Visitor Management – I take the lead for National Parks England in co-ordinating our work on visitor management this coming season. All National Parks expect significant numbers of visitors after the 29 March and the easing of ‘Stay at Home’ guidance. Combined with limited indoor attractions and hospitality it is likely that there will be significant pressure on some National Parks. Whilst this may have negative consequences in some areas, it also creates an opportunity to draw in new audiences, showcase our special qualities and cement the role we play in the nation’s health and well-being. At a local level, Michael Graham has joined the North Yorkshire resilience forum which supports co-ordinated planning across authorities and emergency services. We have also drawn up comprehensive tactical plans for welcoming visitors back from 29 March.

5 Ways of working post covid

- 5.1 The Authority has surveyed staff to understand how they would like to work post-Covid. The pandemic has fast-tracked major changes in the world of office-based work with companies and organisations globally taking advantage of new technologies such as MS Sharepoint, Teams & Zoom to enable more flexible working. There is strong evidence that workforces, especially younger generations, value a greater degree of flexibility than a 9-5 office role. Our survey saw over 75 responses with a large majority of staff welcoming the greater flexibility that remote and virtual working had created whilst also missing the social interaction of the office.
- 5.2 We do want to recapture some lost momentum from the last 12 months of office absence but our view is the Authority will not be resuming a return to full office working from the end of June when lockdown measures are planned to be lifted. A gradual roll-out of Office 365 is planned over coming months to improve our ability to work more flexibly.

6. National Park Trust

- 6.1 Together with the Trustees, as Chair of the North York Moors National Park Trust I have initiated a strategic review of the Trust to renew its vision and priorities for the coming years, consider its funding strategy and identify the resources it will need to succeed. Malcolm Bowes will give a verbal report on these discussions and other developments at the NPA meeting.

7. Recruitment

- 7.1 A number of roles have been successfully recruited in recent weeks including Head of Ranger & Recreation Services, Rights of Way Officer & conservation officer. The Woodland Restoration team supported by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund bid awarded to the National Park Trust is now in place and already working hard. I continue to be hugely impressed by the calibre of talent that the Authority continues to recruit and the level of interest that we receive

from candidates. This exemplifies the passion and sense of purpose that colleagues get from working for National Parks.

8. Remote attendance at local Authority meetings

8.1 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) 2020 regulations have enabled Local Authorities including National Park Authorities to hold their public meetings remotely since 4 April 2020. By virtue of the Coronavirus Act 2020, the Regulations have a sunset date of 6 May 2021. The Government has indicated that there is insufficient time to bring forward new legislation to extend these measures. This brings the risk of a potential gap between the lapsing of current provisions and the easing of restrictions in late June. Local Authorities through the LGA are lobbying for an extension and NPAs are following discussions closely.

9. Recommendation

9.1 That Members note the contents of this report.

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