

Date: 25 September 2007

Report: NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY PRIORITIES 2008/09

Purpose of the report

1. To seek approval for the Authority's priorities for 2008/09.

Strategic Planning Framework

2. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

- **Best Value Performance Plan objectives**

Plan and manage all aspects of the Authority's business so as to make the most

Background

3. The Authority first set out its 'priorities' in September 2003, following a detailed evaluation of all the main areas of the Authority's work (its 'programmes') and their respective contributions to achieving the two national park purposes and duty.

4. Members will recall that last year, the Authority carried out a fundamental review of those priorities. All our programmes were re-evaluated and the information considered by Members — first at a Policy Development Forum, and then at the Authority meeting in November 2006. This led to a significant overhaul of the Authority's various programmes, their relative priority and the way they are presented. The agreed priorities for 2007/08 are set out in **Annex A**. Members should note that — for ease of reference — the list has been annotated to show how the three categories of programmes line up with the former five category (A-E) system.

5. As a reminder to Members, a brief description of the activities covered by each programme (in alphabetical order) is at **Annex B**.

6. The priorities are intended to help set the medium-term, strategic direction of the Authority and this will be compromised if wholesale changes are made every year. Members, therefore, agreed that the priorities should be subject to only 'light touch' reviews in 2008/09 and 2009/10.

Reviewing the priority of the Authority's programmes

7. The Senior Management Team has considered whether there have been any changes (e.g. major changes to Government policy) since November 2006 that are so significant that the Authority may want to consider changing the priority of particular programmes for 2008/09. As a result, a number of possible changes have been identified for Members to consider:

Limestone Country project

8. The Limestone Country project finishes on 31 March 2008. While the Authority will continue to look at ways to support upland livestock farming and produce, this will be done through other programmes (e.g. Farm Conservation). The ending of the project will create a 'vacancy' amongst the priority programmes.

Climate Change

9. There is little doubt that the major policy shift in the last year has been in relation to climate change. As a result, Defra's 'expectations' for NPAs for the period 2008/09-2011/12 (**Annex C**) contains two additions from the previous advice:

- working with Natural England on 'resource and carbon management and sustainable products';
- providing leadership on climate change.

10. At present, much of the work being done to tackle/respond to climate change is through programmes such as 'Biodiversity', 'Farm Conservation', and the 'Sustainable Development Fund', which are already priorities for the Authority. However, a number of the Authority's commitments on climate change (e.g. assessing its impact on the Park, supporting carbon storage through land management) do not fall neatly into any one programme. It is, therefore, proposed that the Authority establish a new work programme: 'Climate Change', and that this replaces 'Limestone Country' as one of the Authority's 'priority programmes'. A description of the activities that would be covered by such a programme is included in Annex B.

Public Sector Agreement (PSA) targets

11. As part of the current Government spending review, new PSA targets are being developed for various government departments. Some — notably those for Defra, DCLG and DCMS — could have implications for the Authority. However, at this stage we have no real indication of the likely outcome (other than that climate change is likely to feature strongly). It is proposed that any significant changes be considered in next year's review of priorities.

Local Area Agreements

12. At the sub-regional level, North Yorkshire County Council has produced its Local Area Agreement. This sets out a range of targets, the vast majority of which are outside the Authority's remit. However, the Authority does have a direct interest, and potential role to play, in some, notably the targets set for: conservation of road verges and increasing volunteering. However, given the relative priority already attached to these programmes (see Annex A) no changes are needed.

National Park Management Plan

13. The updated Management Plan was approved in November 2006, and the objectives set in the Plan were fully considered as part of last year's fundamental review. It is too early to tell whether there is any need for the Authority to refocus resources towards any particular objectives (the first annual summary of progress will come to the Authority in March next year).

Performance Improvement Reviews

14. The Audit and Review Committee has identified two Authority programmes that will be subject to Performance Improvement Reviews this year: 'Toilets' and 'Planning Policy'. Neither review will be completed in time to affect decisions on next year's priorities.

Retail

15. The Authority has recently overturned a decision which limited retail activity to a rather tight definition of promoting statutory purposes. A number of Members have expressed the view that the NPA needs to improve its retail operation, particularly at this time of tight financial constraint on the DEFRA Grant. However, this area of the Authority's work remains low on the list of priorities.

Conclusion

16. As ever, there have been a number of changes (both externally and in relation to the Authority's own thinking) since the current priorities were set in November 2006. Of these, the most significant is the growing emphasis on tackling climate change. The ending of the Limestone Country project creates an opportunity to make work on climate change one of the Authority's priorities for next year. Leaving the other programmes as they are will provide consistency for staff and our partner bodies, and allow the Authority to maintain its focus on achieving the new objectives set in the National Park Management Plan earlier this year.

RECOMMENDATION

17. That Members agree the Authority's priorities for 2008/09 as set out in Annex A, with the Limestone Country project being replaced by a new programme on 'Climate Change'.

Gary Smith
Head of Conservation and Policy

10 September 2007

YDNPA PRIORITIES FOR 2007/08**Priority Programmes (A)**

Biodiversity	Development Control
Green Lanes	Farm Conservation
Limestone Country Project	Rights of Way
Sustainable Development Fund	Web-based Services

Programmes where we will maintain a good level of service and/or make steady improvements

(B)	(C)
Archaeology	Building Conservation
Enforcement	Communications
Outreach	Countryside Skills and Training
Recreational Activities	Definitive Map
Sustainable Tourism Support	Education
Trees and Woodlands	Planning Policy
Volunteers	State of the Park
Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust	Toilets

Programmes where progress will be limited and/or dependent on external funding

(D)	(E)
'Access for all'	Branding
Cultural Heritage	Car Parks
Geodiversity	Events
Historic Environment Record	National Park Management Plan
Landscape Policy and Advice	Pennine Bridleway
National Park Centres	Public Transport
Open Access	Retail
Park Information Points	Traffic Management

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTIONS

'ACCESS FOR ALL'

- Works to the surfaces of rights of way and the provision of more accessible stiles and gates etc;
- Improve other recreation opportunities for disabled people;
- Information about accessibility in the National Park.

ARCHAEOLOGY

- Action to preserve historic buildings and structures that are neglected because they are of no economic value or have uncertain ownership;
- Research to improve knowledge of the historic environment, and help local people and visitors to realise and appreciate its value and interest (e.g. archaeology day school);
- Monitor the condition of the NP's most important historic sites and features;
- Respond to wide range of statutory and non-statutory consultations.

BIODIVERSITY

- Produce, co-ordinate and monitor the Biodiversity Action Plan;
- Implement Habitat and Species Action Plans;
- Rolling programme of habitat surveys across the Park;
- Species monitoring and research projects;
- Support for 'Hay Time' project to restore degraded hay meadows;
- Develop community/volunteer involvement in Local Nature Reserves.

'BRANDING'

- Develop a strong and consistent 'brand' for the National Park to support Park purposes, including integration of 'Britain's Breathing Spaces' and YTB brand research;
- Promotional activity to showcase different facets of the Park so as to change perceptions about the National Park amongst target audiences;
- Develop opportunities to support local products (e.g. 'Limestone Country' beef) that make a strong contribution to national park purposes.

BUILDING CONSERVATION

- Advise on significant applications for Listed Building consent;
- Action to conserve Listed Buildings that are 'at risk';
- Raise awareness of built heritage, and help people to realise and appreciate its value;
- Monitor the condition of the NP's listed buildings and other important built features;
- Appraise, designate and produce management plans for Conservation Areas;
- Provide detailed advice and assistance to the Rural Development Service, YDMT and others on applications for funding for works to restore traditional field barns.

CAR PARKS

- Ticket machine provision, management and cash collection;
- Rates;
- Repair and maintenance works.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Assess the most likely impacts of climate change on the National Park;
- Support action to mitigate the impact of climate change on the Park;
- Take action to reduce the Authority's own CO₂ emissions.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Provide interpretative materials at important sites in the National Park and in National Park Centres;
- Facilitate and support production of high quality interpretation by other organisations and individuals;
- Produce a range of publications that inform people and promote understanding of the National Park;
- Attend a range of shows and exhibitions in and beyond the National Park.

COUNTRYSIDE SKILLS AND TRAINING

- Support for initiatives that develop traditional rural skills;
- Provide practical apprenticeship placements within the Authority's Ranger Service.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Run the Dales Countryside Museum and manage the collection of cultural heritage artefacts;
- Develop and enhance the cultural heritage and traditions within the National Park;
- Enhance the opportunities for both visitors and local communities to understand and enjoy the arts, folklore, music and traditions of the National Park.

DEFINITIVE MAP

- Make Modification Orders to change the Definitive Map;
- Divert footpaths or bridleways, and enter into creation agreement and orders where appropriate;
- Temporary closures of rights of way (e.g. for health and safety reasons);
- Keep a public register of RoW modification and path order applications;
- Digitise the current 3 Definitive Maps to create a single digital Definitive Map for the Park.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

- Provide pre-application advice and assistance to the public;
- Deal with all planning applications and appeals;
- Carry out Land Charge Searches;
- Advise, guide and monitor the development of mineral working and quarries;
- Comment on major applications for development close to the Park.

EDUCATION

- Provide a range of education programmes and resources;
- Contribute to the sustainable development education agenda regionally and nationally.

ENFORCEMENT

- Monitor development and investigate complaints to ensure compliance with planning control.

EVENTS

- Organise an annual programme of events (e.g. guided walks) for the public.

FARM CONSERVATION

- Prepare Farm Environment Plans for farmers wishing to enter Environmental Stewardship Scheme;
- Provide a range of environmental advice/assistance to farm businesses;
- Advise and support DEFRA in the delivery of national agri-environment schemes;

GEODIVERSITY

- Raise awareness of the geodiversity of the Park;
- Develop a local geodiversity action plan.
- Carry out works to protect and enhance regionally important sites.

GREEN LANES

- Gather evidence and make Traffic Regulation Orders;
- Carry out works to specific routes, as part of the management of those routes;
- Liaise through the Yorkshire Dales green lane advisory group;
- Provide information and advice to clarify users' responsibilities (e.g. signing and NERC Act).

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

- Provide public access to information on the historic environment of the Park;
- Transfer existing paper records into an electronic format.

LANDSCAPE POLICY AND ADVICE

- Prepare a Landscape Character Strategy for the National Park;
- Promote the Authority's Landscape Character Assessment;
- Provide advice on agri-environment scheme applications etc.

'LIMESTONE COUNTRY' PROJECT

- Fund the establishment of herds of traditional hardy cattle, and associated infrastructure;
- Provide advice and assistance to farmers in the scheme;
- Carry out environmental enhancements (rabbit/bracken control);
- Research on environmental and economic impacts of the project;
- Assist development of 'Limestone Country Beef' brand and marketing.

NATIONAL PARK CENTRES

- Provide tourist information, retail services, advice and information on the National Park;
- Promote local services;
- Contribute to the running costs of 'partnership centres';
- Rates, maintenance etc for buildings.

NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

- Develop, monitor and review progress in implementing the National Park Management Plan;
- Production of National Park Management Plan.

OPEN ACCESS

- Determine applications for restrictions and exclusions to 'open access' areas;
- Positive visitor management in relation to nature conservation, land management and wardening;
- Physical works to enhance access to, and within, 'open access' areas.

OUTREACH

- Engage with new audiences, notably minority ethnic communities (e.g. 'Mosaic partnership')
- Programme of outreach activities targeted on specific groups;
- Raise awareness of the Park amongst residents of surrounding urban areas.

PARK INFORMATION POINTS

- Maintain a network of Information Points inside and beyond the National Park boundary.

PENNINE BRIDLEWAY

- Carry out a programme of works to implement the new national trail through the Park.

PLANNING POLICY

- Prepare and review the Local Development Framework;
- Represent the Authority's interests in shaping Regional planning policy;
- Facilitate the delivery of affordable housing.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- Assist the provision of innovative public transport services;
- Liaise with providers and users through the Sustainable Travel partnership;
- Provide public transport information for users.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Promote responsible use through specific information 'campaigns' for different activities, and liaison with local communities, clubs, and user groups;
- Monitor and audit activities: to manage their impact and safeguard the National Park;
- Encourage visitors and residents to get more 'active' while enjoying the National Park (e.g. cycling);
- Increase opportunities for any activities based on the special qualities of the Park and where there is a recognised need (e.g. canoeing);
- Large scale events (e.g. 'Three Peaks', cyclo-cross, fell races and sponsored walks).
- Provide the secretariat for the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum.

RETAIL

- Market, sell and wholesale to local retail outlets a range of products, including appropriate local products, which promote the National Park and local skills.

RIGHTS OF WAY

- Carry out works to maintain and enhance rights of way;
- Bridges; construction, maintenance and structural surveys;
- Liaise with landowners, parish councils, and users groups on rights of way matters;
- Remove physical obstructions.

STATE OF THE PARK

- Monitor progress on the objectives set out in the National Park Management Plan;
- Co-ordinate and produce the 'State of the Park Report';
- Analyse and distribute data from other bodies (e.g. 2001 Census).

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

- Support projects that contribute to the environmental, social and economic well-being of the Dales.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

- Work through the Yorkshire Dales and Harrogate Tourism Partnership to promote appropriate tourism and tourism services;
- Assist in the implementation of the Tourism Partnership's Action plan and the development of tourist markets for local products;
- Encourage public support for local businesses, products and services that contribute to sustainable development.

TOILETS

- Maintain and clean public conveniences.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

- Contribute to Local Transport Plan development and implementation;
- Influence the design and signage of traffic management schemes and traffic flow through and within the Park by responding to consultations and traffic management strategies.

TREES AND WOODLANDS

- Develop, facilitate and fund new planting and management schemes (working with Forestry Commission, YDMT and others);
- Support woodland management, training and product initiatives through Yorwoods;
- Protect important amenity trees and hedgerows;
- Manage the Authority's own trees and woodlands;
- Research and surveys to inform conservation activity.

VOLUNTEERS

- Promote and manage volunteering opportunities with the Authority;
- Training, conferences, travel expenses, and clothing for core 'Dales Volunteers';
- Provide work placements.

WEB-BASED SERVICES

- Maintain and develop the range of information provided through the Authority's website;
- Develop the range of Authority services to the public that can be provided electronically through the website, including through Geographical Information Services.

YORKSHIRE DALES MILLENNIUM TRUST

- Support the running costs of the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust;
- Identify and develop funding opportunities and projects.

DRAFT**Defra expectations for the National Parks 2008/09 – 2010/11**

This document has been produced in consultation with Natural England and the National Park Authorities, to highlight those areas on which Defra particularly expects progress to be made during the years covered by the 2007 Spending Review. It is not a definitive list of activities for each Authority.

- a. Promote the principles of sustainable development as a means of achieving a more sustainable way of living in the Parks which will enhance and conserve local culture, wildlife, landscape, land use and community;
- b. Ensure that systems are in place to continue the management and promotion of the right of access to open countryside introduced under the provisions of the CRow Act 2000;
- c. Actively promote understanding and greater use of National Parks by all sections of society, especially people with disabilities, people from ethnic minorities, the inner cities and young people;
- d. In the light of the findings of the Countryside Agency study into the recreational capacity of the Parks, work with Defra and Natural England to promote the widest range of sustainable recreational opportunities within the Parks which they are capable of absorbing and fulfil the commitments made in the Health Concordat 2005 agreed by the Association of National Park Authorities, the Countryside Agency, English Nature, the Forestry Commission, and Sport England;
- e. Promote wildlife conservation and cultural heritage by:
 - contributing to the delivery of Defra's target to bring 95% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest into favourable condition by 2010, both on the Park's own estate and across the Park as a whole;
 - contributing to the delivery of Defra's Public Service Agreement target to reverse the decline in wild birds, the England Biodiversity Strategy and UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets, and implementing recommendations 9 and 10 (biodiversity monitoring and delivery) of the National Parks Review;
- f. Work with others:
 - support sustainable rural development projects which further National Park purposes, working with RDAs, Natural England and sub-regional partners;
 - add value by providing targeted support for individual projects and schemes either separately or in partnership with government departments and agencies;
 - seek corporately and individually to develop and promote other sources of funding, such as Lottery schemes, to support National Park purposes;
 - continue to work with authorities responsible for administering AONBs;
- g. Corporately and individually, continue to take forward work on the state of the park indicators as important contributing information to the management of the Parks;
- h. Work with Defra, Natural England and others to deliver an integrated range of public benefits and ecosystems services, including landscape, biodiversity, access, resource and carbon management and sustainable products.
- i. To play a leadership role, nationally and regionally, in the response to climate change.
- j. Working with DCLG, continue to improve performance and service delivery in all functional areas.