

## Report 7: Management Plan Update

### 1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Management Plan; give members a summary of the consultation responses and provide an outline of the next steps.

### 2. Recommendations

The Authority is recommended to:

- a. Note the progress being made with the Management Plan review;
- b. Note the positive response to the six-week consultation process; and
- c. Note the next steps for conclusion of the Management Plan review.

### 3. Implications

- a. Financial: The Management Plan is funded from within the current medium term budget plan.
- b. Equalities: A key aim for the Management Plan review will be to embed the ambition and objectives to deliver a National Park for All, building on the Authority's ambition to engage new audiences, particularly from currently under-represented sections of society
- c. Link to Business Plan: As the top-level strategic plan for the National Park, the Management Plan will set the ambition and framework for future iterations of the Authority's Business Plan.

### 4. Background

- a. At the December 2020 Authority meeting Members agreed the background to, need for and requirements for a new National Park Management Plan.
- b. Updates have been provided regularly to Members in March 2021, July 2021, September 2021 and December 2021 outlining the progress made with the review. In early 2022 five lead members were involved in theme working groups. In March 2022 Members were involved in a workshop and later that month agreed to the draft Management Plan to go out to public consultation.
- c. The Management Plan Partnership Group (MPPG) met in July, September, late November 2021 and February 2022. The Group is due to meet again on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022 to discuss the outcomes of the consultation process and the next steps. An update from the group will be provided to Members at the meeting.

### 5. Consultation on draft Management Plan

- a. The consultation process commenced on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and concluded on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022. As outlined to Members in the March 2022 Authority

report, the draft Management Plan was to be consulted on using both traditional and digital techniques including using digital and social media, an online questionnaire (also available by request in paper form) as well as the local press and drop-in events. Posters advertising the drop in events were displayed in local community venues.

- b. At the launch on 31<sup>st</sup> March the following consultations were carried out:
  - Letters were sent to every household (1083) in the National Park
  - Press release was picked up by Hexham Courant and the Journal
  - Webpage went live, including a short film:  
[Draft Management Plan Consultation - YouTube](#)
  - Online questionnaire went live, with a QR code included on all information.
  - E-newsletter featuring the draft plan went to all 214 farmers and landowners in the National Park
  - Email consultation sent to over 40 statutory consultees/partners
  - Email consultation sent to 32 parish councils who cover the National Park
  - E-newsletter to 4000 contacts on National Park Authority Database
- c. The team also used contacts to promote the consultation through the Community Action Northumberland (CAN) E-newsletter (approx. 1900 mailing list) and Northumberland CVLA Newsletter.
- d. Over the six-week consultation period 26 questions were posed on social media - Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn covering a variety of questions across all the main themes as well as wider questions about the challenges being faced in the National Park.
- e. Four drop-in events were organised to reach residents, landowners, local businesses, local interest groups and parish councils. These events were widely publicised. Event locations were chosen to cover the whole National Park area from Kirknewton in the north, Rothbury as a gateway town and for the communities of Coquet Valley; Otterburn to cover those in Bellingham, Elsdon and Rochester; and The Sill to cover the Hadrian's Wall area including the far west of the National Park. These drop-ins were intended as informal events where residents and others could visit and discuss their views on the draft plan with NNPA staff and members.

## **6. Consultation response**

- a. The responses received clearly show an overall support for the draft Management Plan and no significant omissions have been identified by respondents. The consultation responses included 80 completed questionnaires, 41 people attending our four drop-in events, 12 bespoke email responses received from consultees, partners and interested parties, and numerous very positive responses and online engagement from our social media campaign. The

consultation video, which was used on social media and at drop-in events, had wide reach and was viewed by over 7,000 people.

- b. A total of 238 responses were received to the consultation process, with a wide range in depth of response varying from a couple comprising multiple page emails, to one sentence responses on social media. The table below shows the different methods of consultation responses.

| Consultation Tool                                   | Number of responses |
|---|---------------------|
| Management Plan & other emails                      | 16                  |
| Completed questionnaires: - online (75) & paper (5) | 80                  |
| Social media comments: - Facebook                   | 8                   |
| - Instagram (including stories)                     | 90                  |
| - LinkedIn  | 3                   |
| Drop-in events                                      | 41                  |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>238</b>          |

Figure 1 Table showing numbers of responses by tool

- c. Detailed written responses were received from a number of partner organisations including the Environment Agency, Natural England, Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, Historic England, Campaign for National Parks, National Farmers Union, CLA, RSPB, Transport NE, Joint Local Access Forum and Northumberland County Council. All partner organisations welcomed the direction of travel with many offering to collaborate to tackle the challenges faced.
- d. There were 41 attendees in total across the four drop-in events. These were mainly local residents, including farmers and landowners. Some attendees were keen to discuss specific local interests whilst views on issues such as nature recovery and land use varied considerably. Recurring topics were striking the right balance, whether in terms of land use for recreation, nature recovery and food production, or between encouraging visitors but not spoiling the tranquillity they sought and enjoyed in the National Park. There was a clear support for climate action, with numerous comments regarding renewables and the need to make homes more energy efficient.
- e. A questionnaire was developed to determine feedback on the main aims of the five themes, as well obtain views on the special qualities that define Northumberland National Park. Over 80 responses were received, with half of

those completing the questionnaire considering themselves residents. A snapshot of responses is included in Appendix 1.

- f. Engagement with the social media campaign was considered very positive. Over 102 written comments were received through Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, with a very wide reach noted from the data collected about those people viewing the posts. One comment received on a Facebook post in the last week of the consultation reminding readers about the deadline said :

*“Done! A proper consultation that is inspiring and seeking actual views. A world away from other community consultations I’ve completed. Well done”.*

## **7. Next steps**

- a. The detailed responses from all sources have been collated and divided into theme and each theme officer lead is considering the responses. It is clear from the questionnaire that all of the main aims for each of the five themes are very much supported with on average 85% support for each theme main aim. However, the Climate Action theme raised the most divergent views with 14% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the main aim. This was largely in respect of whether this is a priority or whether the ambition in the Management Plan is strong enough. As a result this theme is being discussed and reviewed in further detail.
- b. Support was received for the definitions of the four special qualities, with dark skies being raised as an element of tranquillity that should be drawn out more.
- c. The project team will be working towards creating a concise vision which sets out the main strategic vision for the Management Plan now that the general content and ambition has been endorsed through public consultation. Once defined the vision will be brought to Members for discussion prior to being finalised as part of the Plan.
- d. It is acknowledged that the progress towards finalising the plan has been delayed compared to the original timeline. However, when considering the level and depth of consultation responses received we allow time to take stock and make changes accordingly. It was clear from the consultation that our partners and stakeholders want to see more detail and time bound targets to be included within the Plan, and this needs to be addressed.
- e. Work has already begun on these amendments and officers are aiming to bring a final Management Plan to the Authority for approval in September 2022 should sufficient progress and agreement be achieved. A separate workshop will be scheduled with members ahead of a final Plan coming to Authority for approval.

## **8. Conclusions**

- a. A very welcome and positive response to the Management Plan consultation process was received.
- b. It is considered important to step back and consider the responses in full and work on providing more detail as requested.

- c. Theme leads will be carrying out further work in developing the detail of their themes and more detail will come before Members in the form of further discussion on the vision and detailed plan either at an Authority meeting or a workshop.

**Appendix 1:** Bar charts showing summary responses to Questionnaire

**Contact Officer:** For further information contact: Susannah Buylla, Head of Planning & Policy on 01434 611577 or [Susannah.Buylla@nnpa.org.uk](mailto:Susannah.Buylla@nnpa.org.uk)