

Report 9: UK National Parks Conference 2024

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek early endorsement of the approach, theme and location for the UK National Parks Conference 2024 which is to be hosted by Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA).

2. Recommendations

The Authority is recommended to:

- a. Approve the approach, theme and location for the conference in 2024 to enable officers to begin organising the detail of the event and make necessary bookings.

3. Implications

- a. Financial: a separate budget will be created for the event with the aim of a breakeven position. Income will be achieved through delegate fees and sponsorship.
- b. Equalities: The conference will focus on 'Landscapes for Everyone' as the key theme, and we will ensure that provision is made for any delegate, speaker or attendee with additional needs.
- c. Link to Business Plan: The conference will deliver on all elements of the Business Plan as it will showcase the breadth of NNPA's work but it will put particular focus on Aim 1, Aim 5 and Aim 6.

4. Background

- a. As a group of UK National Parks we hold a biannual conference. Each National Park has an opportunity to host and 2024 is Northumberland National Park's turn. The conference is attended by National Park Authority members, senior executives, key partners, government and other stakeholders.
- b. The host park has the opportunity to set the theme, programme and location of the conference and also takes on the responsibility of organising and resourcing it.
- c. The 2022 conference is being hosted by Exmoor National Park and the theme is '*What does the nation need from National Parks today?*'. Exmoor have slightly changed the format and delegates will be booking their own accommodation and meeting only for the programmed events. Programme and information can be found [HERE](#)

5. Proposed 2024 Conference Theme – Landscapes for Everyone

- a. Our proposal is to build on the strength shown in NNPA's commitment and expertise in welcoming more and different people to engage with landscape as demonstrated by the success of The Sill Project and accompanying engagement

programme. We will use the Landscapes Review wording of Landscapes for Everyone to create the central theme of our programme.

“Our national landscapes should be alive for people, places where everyone is actively welcomed in and there are unrivalled opportunities to enjoy their natural beauty and all it offers: landscapes for all.” Glover, National Landscapes Review.

- b. Through the lens of Landscapes for Everyone we will explore the breadth of the work of National Parks including nature, people, climate and place and discuss how we are engaging and involving more and different people in this work.
- c. The programme will be made up of talks, panel discussions, informal and formal discussion and networking opportunities, collective problem solving and site visits.

6. Location

- a. We are proposing to revert back to the previous format and aim to host all delegates in one venue for conference sessions, networking and accommodation. It is difficult to find a venue in the National Park so our proposal is that in relation to the theme of Landscapes for Everyone and the lack of sufficiently sized venues within the National Park, we host the conference in the centre of Newcastle with trips into the National Park for sessions and site visits.
- b. The benefit of Newcastle as a location is that it has more accommodation choice and options, is more accessible to a wider national audience by public transport and it also affords equal access to all parts of the National Park for site visits from a single location.

7. Resource and capacity

- a. Hosting the UK conference represents a significant challenge and piece of work for the host Authority. In the context of increasingly limited resources and current budget challenges this is a significant consideration for NNPA.
- b. We intend to use the in-house resources and expertise of our hires and engagement team at The Sill, who will be supported by in-house fundraising and communications capacity to secure sponsorship and provide promotional support. The project will be led by the Director of Business Development who will work closely with the Chief Executive.

8. Conclusions

- a. Members are requested to endorse the recommendations in section 2 of this report and agree the approach, location and theme of the conference.

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