

**NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**  
**MINUTES OF THE FULL AUTHORITY MEETING**  
**Eastburn, South Park, Hexham, NE46 1BS**  
**Live Streamed**  
**Friday 23 September 2022 from 10.26am – 1.30pm**

**Present:**

Ms Jean Davidson (SoS National)	Cllr Denis Mullan (SoS Parish)
Cllr Sue Bolam (SoS Parish)	Mr Chris Mullin (SoS National)
Ms Liz Ellis (SoS National)	Cllr Mark Purvis (NCC)(part of the meeting)
Cllr Val Gibson (SoS Parish)(part of the meeting)	Cllr John Riddle (NCC)(part of the meeting)
Cllr Len Glen-Davison (SoS Parish)	Ms Pippa Ross (SoS National)
Ms Fiona Gough (SoS National)	Cllr Andy Saunders (SoS Parish)
Cllr Mark Mather (NCC)	Cllr Catherine Seymour (NCC)
Cllr Julian Morrison-Bell (SoS Parish)	Cllr Alan Sharp (NCC)

**In Attendance**

Tony Gates (Chief Executive (National Park Officer)); Pauline Wall (Director of Park Management); Hazel Fitzsimmons (Head of Business Support, Chief Financial Officer, (S151 Officer)); Susannah Buylla (Head of Planning & Policy); Tracey Craft (Finance Manager); Ben Rogers (Performance and Intelligence Officer); Sharon Robson (Corporate Support Manager & PA to Chief Executive); Jayne Longlands (Corporate Support Officer); Tim Care (Ward Hadaway Solicitors).

The meeting commenced at 10.26am and was preceded by a Farming in Protected Landscapes presentation from Sally Graham (Farming in Protected Landscapes Manager).

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**NPA35-2022 Apologies for Absence**

Received from; Cllr Eileen Cartie (NCC), Ms Marie Fallon (SoS National), and Seth Marber (Independent Person).

**NPA36-2022 Chair and Chief Executive's Introduction**

The Chair and Chief Executive updated the Board on various matters, including the following :-

- There were two SoS members due to step down the following year (both Ms Fiona Gough and the Chair herself); an extra year's extension had been applied for and a reply was awaited.
- The Chair would be arranging member appraisals in due course.
- A staff, member and volunteer day out at Kirknewton had been held the previous day and had been very successful.
- A special authority meeting to consider the Management Plan Meeting would take place on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at Ingram.
- The topic for the next Policy Conference would be 'Nature Recovery'.
- The UK National Parks Conference in Exmoor would take place the following week.
- Ministerial changes at Defra were reported to the Board.

- Nationally, the government's final Landscapes Review response and recommendations was expected in due course.
- National Parks England Chairs had written to Ministers regarding funding challenges and received a response; the Chair would share this with members.
- Defra Grant Meeting; the Chief Executive, together with the Head of Business Support, Chief Financial Officer, (S151 Officer), would meet with the Defra sponsorship team, to highlight the very challenging financial position of the Authority.
- The Chief Executive was currently the UK Lead Officer for National Parks UK; there would be a Chairs Forum at Exmoor the following week to look at practical projects (including climate change) across all UK National Parks.
- A bid had been submitted to the Borderlands Growth Deal for visitor site enhancement at Walltown Country Park and an outcome was awaited.
- Our bid to the Landscape Recovery Pilot, which was at the third tier of ELMS, had been unsuccessful.
- We were working closely with the North of Tyne Combined Authority through NCC on a rural investment plan for the North of Tyne area.
- The NNPA Foundation had two new members (Andrew Hodgson and Jonathan Joures) and the AGM would take place on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2022.
- We would be continuing with staff blended working until September 2023.

#### **NPA37-2022      Questions Received from Members of the Public**

No questions were received from members of the public.

#### **NPA38-2022      Declaration of member and officer interests**

There were no declarations of member and officer interests.

#### **NPA39-2022      Minutes of Authority Meeting held 22 June 2022**

The draft Minutes of the Authority Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 22 June 2022 were proposed as a true and correct record by Ms Pippa Ross, seconded by Cllr Catherine Seymour, and it was further

#### **RESOLVED**

- (a) That the draft Minutes of the Authority Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 22 June 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record, and signed by the Chair.

#### **NPA40-2022      Report 1 – Annual Accounts to March 2022**

Tracey Craft, Finance Manager, presented on this item, with Francis Llave, External Auditor from Ernst & Young LLP, attending via Teams.

There being no issues raised, the Chair drew attention to the recommendations, proposed by Cllr Denis Mullan and seconded by Cllr Andy Saunders and there being no objections or abstentions, members

## RESOLVED TO

- (a) Note the Draft Statement of Accounts 2021/22 (Appendix 1 to Report 1);
- (b) Delegate responsibility to the Chairman and Chief Executive (National Park Officer) in consultation with the Chair of the Finance and Audit Group to approve and sign off the final accounts for issue upon receipt of the final audit report; and
- (c) Endorse the findings to date in the Draft Audit Results Report for the year ended 31 March 2022 from Ernst & Young LLP (Appendix 2 to Report 1).

### **NPA41-2022 Report 2 – First Quarter Financial Performance and Medium-Term Budget Update**

Hazel Fitzsimmons, the Head of Business Support, Chief Financial Officer, (S151 Officer), presented Report 2, as tabled.

There being no issues raised, the Chair drew attention to the recommendation, which was proposed by Ms Pippa Ross, seconded by Cllr Alan Sharp and, there being no objections or abstentions, approved by members who

## RESOLVED TO

- (a) Note the contents of the report

### **NPA47-2022 Report 8 - Governance Task and Finish Group 2022: Reviewing the number and make-up of the Members of the Northumberland National Park Authority**

**Note:** This item had been moved up the agenda to allow as many members as possible to contribute before departing for another meeting.

The Chief Executive introduced the report, which had been produced jointly with Ms Liz Ellis, Chair of the Task and Finish Group. Ms Liz Ellis noted the Glover Review in 2018 which focused on making landscapes more accessible for everyone.

A full and comprehensive discussion ensued, with members discussing Board membership numbers, and the following key points were also made:-

- It was confirmed that there were currently no maximum term limits in place within two of the Board membership categories (Parish and County Council).
- Co-opted members could provide additional Board representation and more varying opinions.
- A skills matrix would be beneficial in identifying key skills. Co-optees would add value in filling any potential skills gaps.
- Experience was equally important as skills and noted that Parish Council members were extremely valuable.
- If meetings were held in the evenings, we might attract those with a wider group of skills.

The Chair thanked members for their input in this complex discussion and drew attention to the recommendation (a) proposed by Cllr Andy Saunders and seconded by Cllr John Riddle, with nine members voting in favour, and it was:

## **RESOLVED TO**

- (a) Leave the membership numbers as they currently stand at 18.

The Chair then drew attention to the recommendation (b) to (i) proposed by Cllr Denis Mullan and seconded by Cllr Andy Saunders and unanimously

## **RESOLVED TO**

- (b) To embed Member recruitment, development, and progression opportunities within the Business Plan and integrated within overall cultural and organisational learning commitments and ambitions for a more diverse and inclusive Park.
- (c) To agree the development of a skills matrix for the Authority Board based on the needs identified by the Business Plan, to keep this skills matrix updated as required and to undertake regular skills audits of members to identify the need for skills in new members or co-opted members.
- (d) To have a specific focus between 2023 and 2025 of involving younger people under the age of 30 in Governance progression opportunities, including co- option of younger people interested in gaining skills and knowledge of Governance processes.
- (e) To develop opportunities within current Northumberland County Council and Authority processes to meet the necessary skills sets, knowledge and experience required by the Park in active recruitment of NCC Members.
- (f) To encourage a better understanding of the Park and the role of the Authority for Parish Councils within its boundaries so that the Authority may gain the participation of Parish representatives with the necessary skills sets, knowledge and experience required of its Members.
- (g) To agree the recommendations in respect of committee sizes and composition as set out in paragraph 8 of this report.
- (h) To agree to the principle of providing for wider secondment/shadow member opportunities as set out in paragraph 10 in this report.
- (i) Should members agree to changes that require amendments in legislation, that the findings of this review be communicated to Defra ministers.

Cllr John Riddle and Cllr Mark Purvis left the meeting at 12.20pm.

## **NPA42-2022 Report 3 – Quarterly 1 Performance Update**

Ben Rogers, Performance and Intelligence Officer, presented to the Board.

Members welcomed the report and noted that feedback on performance and continual improvement of delivery was crucial for the Park.

There being no questions raised, the Chair drew attention to the recommendation, which was proposed by Cllr Julian Morrison-Bell and seconded by Ms Fiona Gough. Members voted unanimously and

## RESOLVED TO

- (a) Note the delivery of the Interim Work Programme
- (b) Note the revisions to the Strategic Risk Register.

### **NPA43-2022 Report 4 – Review Meeting Development Management: 16 February 2022**

The Chief Executive updated members on the review which found we operated a positive, proactive, responsive and timely development management service. It was noted that the majority of recommendations had been acted upon.

Ms Fiona Gough said that some matters were to be fed back at DMC training including positive things the team were achieving. It was **AGREED** that this would be presented as a summary of quarterly performance to the DMC.

Cllr Sue Bolam was becoming increasingly concerned about consultees and responses going over time; she felt there was a shortage of skills in certain fields and asked for this to be monitored.

There being no other issues raised, recommendations (a) to (c); proposed by Cllr Alan Sharp, seconded by Cllr Len Glen-Davison and, there being no objections or abstentions, were approved by members who:

## RESOLVED TO

- (a) Note the findings and recommendations of the Authority Review of Development Management.
- (b) Consider the responses from Leadership Team.
- (c) Endorse the actions planned as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

### **NPA44-2022 Report 5 – Review Meeting: Net Zero National Park Authority: 29 June 2022**

The Chief Executive introduced this report. Members learnt that progress towards achieving a Net Zero Park was constrained by restrictions in making key capital investments.

The Chief Executive drew members' attention to Recommendation 4 in Appendix 1 and it was **AGREED** that this would be brought back to a future meeting for approval should a specific capital investment from reserves be required..

Cllr Andy Saunders noted the issue with net zero, and the expenses involved in achieving our aims. He said our ownership of land could be important where a case for authority ownership could be made. The Chief Executive clarified that any specific proposal would need a business case and each case would be considered individually for Board members' decision.

There being no other issues, the Chair drew attention to the recommendation (a) to (c), proposed by Ms Pippa Ross, seconded by Cllr Denis Mullan and, with there being no objections or abstentions, members

## **RESOLVED TO**

- (a) Note the findings and recommendations of the Authority Review of Climate Change: Net Zero National Park Authority held on 29 June 2022.
- (b) Consider the responses from Leadership Team.
- (c) Endorse the actions planned as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

### **NPA45-2022 Report 6 – Management Plan Update**

Susannah Buylla, Head of Planning & Policy, presented to the Board, noting that a final sign-off was due to be authorised at a Special Authority Meeting taking place on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

There being no issues raised, the Chair drew attention to the recommendations and proposed by Ms Liz Ellis and seconded by Cllr Mark Mather and it was

## **RESOLVED TO**

- (a) Note the continued progress with the Management Plan review; and
- (b) Note the agreed outcomes from the Member workshop (to be reported verbally)
- (c) Note the next steps for the completion of the Management Plan review and formal endorsement (to be reported verbally)

### **NPA46-2022 Report 7– Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan**

Susannah Buylla, Head of Planning & Policy, presented to the Board on this item.

Cllr Alan Sharp noted there had been a great deal of engagement locally with the neighbourhood plan.

In response to Cllr Julian Morrison-Bell's question, the Head of Planning & Policy suggested that design aspects within this particular plan could be utilised and applied to other neighbourhood plans.

There being no other issues, the Chair drew attention to the recommendation (a) to (c), proposed by Cllr Alan Sharp, seconded by Ms Fiona Gough and with there being no objections or abstentions members

## **RESOLVED TO**

- (a) Agree to formally 'make' the Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan;
- (b) Approve the decision statement (attached at Appendix 1) and for the decision statement to be sent to the qualifying body (Haydon Parish Council);
- (c) Agree that both the Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan and the decision statement are published on the Authority's website explaining that the Plan forms part of the Development Plan for decisions in that area.

### **NPA48-2022 Report 9 - UK National Parks Conference 2024**

The Chief Executive presented the Director of Business Development's report.

He noted that Northumberland would be hosting the 2024 UK National Parks Conference. The venue of Newcastle was proposed as a suitable location with 'Landscapes for Everyone' being a key theme.

A full discussion ensued, and the following key points made:-

- Some members felt strongly that the conference should be held within the Park.
- Other members suggested that good accessibility to Newcastle was very much a desirable factor.
- It was noted that many members of the public lived in urban areas, and we needed to cater for these groups of people, particularly when considering our key theme.
- The event needed to breakeven financially.

The Chief Executive noted that alternative venues had been considered but, for reasons already discussed, Newcastle was thought to be the best choice of venue.

It was felt that it would be more efficient and environmentally friendly to host the event in Newcastle and it was **AGREED** that we explain to conference delegates the reasons for hosting the event in a city. It was also **AGREED** that further member support in fundraising would be beneficial.

The Chair drew attention to the recommendations, and proposed by Ms Pippa Ross and seconded by Cllr Denis Mullan, with two abstentions, it was:

#### **RESOLVED 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.

#### **NPA49-2022 Urgent Business**

#### **Part Two: Confidential and Exempt Items**

*The Chair proposed members pass the resolution: "That under section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, press and public be excluded from this meeting as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act".*

The reasons for the exclusion of press and public for this part of the meeting was clarified as:

*Item NPA50-2022 and NPA51-2022 contained exempt information as per Part 1, Paragraph 2 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 [as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006}. This report contains exempt information relating to information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual and paragraph 3 relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).*

Members were reminded that they are required to be satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing information.

Cllr Alan Sharp proposed the resolution, seconded by Mr Chris Mullin, that the meeting move into Part Two, approved by all members who

**RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from Part Two of the meeting.**

Tim Care left the meeting at 12.46pm.

**Part One of the meeting ended and live streaming stopped at 12.46pm, which concluded the agenda. Members of the press and public left the meeting, Part Two then followed.**

The Full Authority Meeting, including Part Two, ended at 1.30pm.