

Date: 18 December 2012**Report: REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

ENGAGEMENTS

1. Since the last meeting of the Authority in June, the Chief Executive has been involved in the following:-

Media

- Along with the CEO of the North York Moors NPA, took part in an hour long phone-in for BBC Radio York. Issues discussed were: dairy farming - the importance of the role of dairy farming in conserving and shaping our countryside; tourism and economy; proposals to extend the National Park boundary; public spending cuts; Olympic torch relay visit to the Yorkshire Dales, and National Parks Week.
- Interview for the BBC's 'Inside Out' TV programme, on the boundary review.
- Interview for BBC Radio York on Rural Telecommunications

Events

- A half day spent with Nethergill farmer, Chris Clark looking at his work and current and proposed developments on his farm.
- Attended the Great Yorkshire Show at the invitation of Welcome to Yorkshire.
- Attended the Corporate Services Directorate annual team day which included a visit to Smardale Gill National Nature Reserve and Great Asby (proposed for inclusion in the National Park in the boundary review).
- Spent a day with the Area Ranger (Volunteers) looking at his role and work with the National Park Authority. This included visiting Threshfield Quarry to see the new 3.8km of public footpath in the quarry and on adjacent land; management of Threshfield Old Railway; meeting some of the Dales Volunteers; recent surfacing work to prevent flood damage and proposed creation of access for all route on the Dales Way footpath at Kettlewell; and the Upper Wharfe River Restoration Project on the River Skifare near Hawkswick.
- Spent a day with the Senior Historic Environment Officer looking at his role and work with the NPA. This included visiting Craven Lime works; Stainforth Scar; Winskill Stones – Plantlife Nature reserve; recent lime kiln clearance as part of the Geodales project; recent paleo-environment work at Victoria Cave/ Victoria Camp local nature reserve Settle and the Victoria Cave Exhibition at the Folly in Settle.
- Hosted a visit from the Director of ENPAA where the following issues were discussed: ENPAA Business Plan, ENPAA AGM, Annual Appraisals, next Comprehensive Spending Review and NPO Policy leads.

- Along with the Chairman, Mr Weston and the Director for Community & Conservation, hosted the inaugural visit by the new Director for Rural Development, Sustainable Communities and Crops and Deputy Director of Landscape and Outdoor Recreation, Defra. The theme of the visit was the role of National Park Authorities in rural development. It included visits to Threshfield Quarry, Langcliffe Quarry, the former Langcliffe Paper Mill and the new development at the Courtyard in Settle. Discussions centred on a range of current national NPA issues.
- Attended the annual SMT `away day' exploring what makes the Dales special (Distinctly Dales) around the Clapham/Three Peaks area.
- Spent a day with Planning Policy Officer looking at planning policy: Housing Development Plan, Local Plan, Planning Reform; Building Conservation: Listed buildings at Risk, Conservation areas and barns; Sustainable Development Fund; Undergrounding; Hydro and renewables.
- Attended the White Rose Awards Ceremony in Leeds championing tourism in the region.
- English NPOs away day in Exmoor [following ENPAA meeting]
- A day with Estates Manager to discuss duties and projects he is currently involved in which included: planned maintenance; PV panels at Yoredale; DCM re works done and forthcoming review; review of Horton and Stainforth toilets; Malham NPC current works by local contractors and proposed new credit card ticket machine; Grassington proposed upgrades to car park ticket machines and remote access software; managing the cash collection and car park machine maintenance contract; role in managing cleaning contract to toilets, Health and safety and legislation in buildings e.g. asbestos, legionella, etc; Meadow field at Grassington, as part of the 'landholdings and Estates property review'; heat meters installed for the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme and how we maintain the biomass boiler; Aysgarth NPC: overview on recent work carried out and management plan for the Environment Agency.
- Senior Management Team away day at the CB Inn, Arkengarthdale, where the following were discussed: performance management; community engagement and visibility; external funding and 'less with less' including governance & better information for members.
- A member of the Peer Review Team who carried out an assessment of the New Forest NPA as part of the National Park Authority Performance Assessment.
- An inaugural visit to the South Downs National Park by Bronwyn Hill, Permanent Secretary at Defra, to show her a range of national park work and to discuss current issues.
- A presentation to students at Sheffield University on `Landscape Conservation in a Protected Area'.

Meetings

- Along with the Chairman, a meeting with the Yorkshire Dales Society where the following were discussed: update on Boundary Review; update on Government Consultation on Sustainable Development in National Parks; National Park Governance; Cam woodland access road (planning application); visitor pressures on the Three Peaks area and the Dales Integrated Transport Alliance (DITA) Visitor Survey.
- Along with the Chairman, the AGM of ANPA where the following were discussed: Incorporation Paper; UK ANPA Work Programme 2010-2013 – Joint Activities progress

- Along with the Chairman, two ENPAA meetings where the following were discussed: [July] ENPAA engagement with the Spending Review; showcasing good practice priorities; ENPAA staff handbook policies; business plan update; NPA responses to Governance Review; Ministerial Reshuffle Reflections; [Oct] update on NPA Finances; LGA Proposal for Corporate Membership and Hosting
- Chaired 4 video conference meetings of English National Park Officers Group/ENPPA where the following were discussed: [July] Visit England; Partnership Statement and information sharing; Forestry Panel Natural England triennial review; Natural England Uplands Review; SSSI condition; Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) – Next Steps; [Aug] CSR work programme; [Oct] Outreach Group; Arrangements for the Exmoor NPOs away day event; Value of National Parks; National Trails; and Natural England Feedback; [Dec] Growth & Infrastructure Bill update; CLG consultations on planning; Defra state aids unit; response to Chancellor's statement; All-Party Parliamentary Groups meeting feedback; Wood fuel strategies and woodland creation; prep for meeting with Minister; NPA input into health; Visit England Partnership Statement; Defra Permanent Secretary visit and next steps
- Chaired two meetings of the Joint Improvement Group meeting (JIG) where the following were discussed: [July] presentation on 'Value Adding' – lessons learned; future direction/programmes for JIG; 2011/12 NPA family Performance Indicator data; and Sharing Good Practice: Local Government Chronicle Low Carbon Council Award. [Nov] outcome of validation of 2011-12 NPA PIs; framework for measuring environmental outcomes in protected landscapes; residents' survey – current picture across the NPAs; annual performance summary; and update on Socio Economic Study.
- Met with the CEO of South Lakeland District Council (SLDC) where the following were discussed: SLDC Corporate Plan and NPA contribution, housing sites, Boundary Review and New Homes Bonus.
- Met with the Chairman of the Forestry Commission's Regional Advisory Committee to discuss the NPA's relationship with the Forestry Commission.
- Met with regional and local representatives from the National Trust where the following were discussed: National Park Management Plan; update on Local Nature Partnership; Dales Tourism; Moored; review of Land Holdings/Estates; Major Projects – River Wharfe Rehabilitation and Tarn Moss Restoration; Malham National Park Centre – Joint Partnership Opportunities; Outdoors Project – current experiments; Pennine Bridleway Review – scope, timing; staffing restructure and update on Yorkshire Peat Project
- Met with the Assessor for the Customer Service Excellence Award (CSEA) to discuss the Authority re-assessment.
- Met with Local Government Association's Senior Advisor (North East and Yorkshire & the Humber) to discuss the current relationship between the NPA and the Local Government Association.
- Along with the Chairman, two meetings of Local Government North Yorkshire & York (LGNYY) Leaders' Board where the following were discussed: [July] Tour de France; Establishment of NY Police and Crime Panel; Local Public Service Reform; Pooling of Business Rates; PCT Board Consultation omissions. [Dec] Police and Crime Panel: Budget; Flooding – Debrief on Multi Agency Response to Events of September 2012; Local NHS Finances; and Migration Yorkshire Request for Financial Contributions.
- A meeting of interested parties re future of Udales shop, Sedbergh.

- A meeting by video conference with the CEO of the Broads Authority on ENPAA Lead Officer update
- Along with the Chairman, a meeting of the National Park Management Plan Steering Group.
- A meeting with the Yorkshire & Humber Rural Network Manager of 'Involve Yorkshire & Humber' to discuss BME groups and joint rural issue lobbying.
- A meeting of the North of England Civic Trust [NECT] to discuss: Finance & Resourcing; Projects & Activities and Governance.
- A meeting by video conference of the UK National Park Officers Group [JNPOG] where the following were discussed: Finance/funding update; Joint activities report update; Member induction course feedback and NP Week Campaign report; Working Groups report backs; external working group reports; country feedback reports & APPG meeting.
- A meeting of the Deputys/Chairs/CEOs of NYM/YDNPA to discuss matters of mutual interest.
- The 6-month appraisal review meeting with the Chairman.
- A meeting with Welcome to Yorkshire CEO to discuss matters of mutual interest.
- A meeting with Craven District Council CEO; to discuss matters of mutual interest.
- Along with the Chairman; a meeting by video conference of the ANPA - Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- Two meetings with the Investors in People (IiP) Assessor to discuss the recent NPA Assessment.

ISSUES FOR MEMBERS TO NOTE

Update on Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership (NUCLNP)

2. Members were informed at the Authority meeting in June that the Authority was a lead partner in an application to form a Local Nature Partnership for the 'Northern Upland Chain'. The other three lead partners were Northumberland NPA, North Pennines AONB and Nidderdale AONB.
3. In late July, DEFRA informed the partnership that its application was one of 41 applications across the country that had been successful. The successful LNPs were asked to start work straight away. Since then:
 - The North Pennines AONB has offered to provide the secretariat for the NUCLNP for the first 12 months, and committed some resources to undertake this.
 - A Board has been formed, chaired by David Hill, Deputy Chair of Natural England & Chairman of the Environment Bank.
 - The Board membership includes representatives of the Environment Agency, Natural England, Forestry Commission, National Farmers Union, Moorland Association, RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts & the Rivers Trusts, the North East Chamber of Commerce and Yorkshire Water.
 - The first meeting of the Board was held on 19th October, at Yoredale.

4. As well as governance issues, the Board considered a work programme for the first twelve months. Building on the initial ideas for collaborative working identified at the stakeholder engagement meetings, the work programme includes:
- peatland restoration, including potentially co-ordinating a joint bid to the EU Life Programme for funding for a number of restoration programmes;
 - hay meadow conservation, to identify opportunities to build on the various initiatives (such as HayTime) that have been running within the LNP area;
 - potential for a major woodland creation programme across the LNP;
 - potential for piloting 'High Nature Value Farming' programme within the LNP area;
 - expanding the habitat opportunities-mapping already carried out for Nidderdale / Yorkshire Dales to the rest of the LNP area.

Statement of Final Accounts 2011/12

Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2012

5. As part of the annual cycle of finalising the Authority's year-end accounts for 2011/12 and completing the external audit of those accounts:
- The external auditor (Deloitte) submitted their 'Report to the Authority on the 2012 Audit' to the 25 September 2012 meeting of the Authority. This report included the requirement that the Treasurer sign a Letter of Representation setting out the background to the accounts and acknowledging the responsibility for the information given to the auditors, including a confirmation that all relevant information had been provided.
 - The Statement of Final Accounts 2011/12 was also reported to the 25 September meeting, with the requirement that the accounts be signed by the Treasurer and by the Chairman of the Authority. There was also a requirement that the Annual Governance Statement be signed by the Chairman and the Chief Executive; this document is not part of the accounts, but is published with them as best practice.
6. The documents described above are required by government to be signed off no later than 30 September each year. However, because the Authority meeting on 25 September was cancelled due to bad weather, this was not possible, and so the 'Urgent Action' clause of the Authority's delegation scheme (paragraph C1.1) was invoked:
- 'The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) may authorise urgent action requiring an immediate decision on any matter, subject to consultation with the Chairman of the Authority or the Chairman of the appropriate committee to which the function is delegated, and to a subsequent report to the Authority or Committee.'*
7. Following discussions with the Chairman of the Authority (Carl Lis) and of the Finance & Resources Committee (Ann Brooks), all the required documents were signed off as permitted under the above clause, and the audit for 2011/12 has been finalised. Members will note that, although one result of the above is that the Authority acting as one body did not have the opportunity to discuss or comment on these accounts, they

8. Both the Auditor's report and the Statement of Final Accounts are available at <http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/nationalparkauthority/authoritycommittees/authority/authority-september-2012>

Loo of the Year Award

9. This year the Loo of the Year Awards assessor inspected all 10 of the public toilets that we own and manage. Aysgarth was awarded the top Platinum award and, and eight public toilets received Gold awards (Buckden, Grassington, Linton Falls, Malham, Stainforth, Horton, Kettlewell and Hawes), with Clapham receiving a Silver award.
10. This is a significant improvement on the grades achieved last year (which themselves were very good) with nine of the ten toilet blocks showing an improvement in rating (and no deteriorations). The assessor's report describes the improvement as 'far superior to that in 2011'. It is a very positive that, despite the uncertainties created by the cuts, we have managed to improve the service provided to the public. This has been achieved by the careful monitoring of the cleaning contract, a long term planned maintenance programme and day to day work on the condition of these facilities. This work is delivered jointly by the Estates Manager and the Ranger team.

Customer Service Excellence

11. In September 2012, the Authority undertook external re-assessment against the CSE Standard following the original assessment in June 2010. The Assessor spoke to members of staff, volunteers, partners and members of the public, as well as visiting Authority sites and scrutinising documentary evidence over an Assessment visit of one and a half days. Following this, it has been confirmed that the Authority has retained the award.
12. The Assessor was particularly impressed with the attitude, enthusiasm and professionalism of the Authority's staff and volunteers. The Assessor commented that the Authority's decision to concentrate upon a reduced number of core objectives coupled with detailed planning and hard work has enabled the Authority to continue to provide a high quality service that meets the requirements of the CSE Standard and still enjoys high levels of customer satisfaction.
13. Other highlights include:
- 'Your commitment to customer engagement and consultation remains strong; gives you additional customer insight and informs your planning and decision making processes. Visitor satisfaction remains high and you now have specific targets in place for customer satisfaction.'
 - 'You continue to demonstrate a customer-focused approach delivered through a culture of corporate leadership, the attitude and professionalism of the staff and the willingness and enthusiasm of the volunteers.'

- 'You have continued to expand your use of IT and social media to bring about service improvements and to improve your information provision.'
- 'You were able to demonstrate improvement in planning procedure response times and thus delivered timeliness performance comparable with the other National Parks.'

14. In order to maintain compliance with CSE, the Authority will be assessed on parts of the Standard annually, with a full review occurring once every 3 years.

David Butterworth
Chief Executive

Background documents: None

3 December 2012