



Lake District
National Park

Authority: 24 June 2026
Draft Minutes Subject to Committee Approval

Agenda Item: 4

Authority

MINUTES of a meeting of the Lake District National Park Authority held at the National Park Office, Wayfaring House, Murley Moss Business Park, Kendal at 10.00 am on 25 March 2026.

Present

Ms T Hunt MBE (Chair)	Mrs J Lancaster
Mr J Jackson (Deputy Chair)	Ms S Lansbury
Miss J Bailey	Mr R G Minshaw
Ms J Boak	Ms S Mosner
Mr M P Brereton	Mr R Outhwaite
Mr W Clark	Mr D F Rathbone
Ms J A Drake	Mr C J Southward
Mr M Hatton	Mr P Walter
Mr M Kidd	

Apologies

Mrs Stolberg

No apologies received

Mr Dixon
Mr Pratt

01/26 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs Stolberg.

02/26 Minutes

Decided: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

03/26 Chair's announcements

The Chair commenced by welcoming Miss Juliet Bailey to her first Committee as the new Secretary of State (independent) Member. Miss Bailey provided a brief introduction highlighting her legal background, work in the charitable sector, and ownership of a sheep holding. Mrs Stolberg who was observing the meeting via TEAMS was warmly welcomed to the meeting by the Chair.

Chair announced to the Committee and members of the public that the meeting was being livestreamed and that a digital recording of the meeting would be made.

The Chair then reported on recent activity undertaken on behalf of the Authority, including the televised launch of the Coast-to-Coast National Trail and continuing engagement with National Parks England and Defra. A welcome was extended to Debbie Stockwell, the new CEO of NPE. A workshop relating to protected landscape governance had been attended by the Chair and CEO. She also referred to meetings held, and planned, with parliamentary and mayoral candidates and advised that dates for the forthcoming round of parish council distinctive area meetings would be circulated and that Members were welcome to attend. Finally, the Authority Solicitor was invited to outline the nomination and ballot procedures for election of Authority Chair and Deputy Chair for the benefit of new Members.

04/26 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of a registrable interest or disclosable pecuniary interest relating to any of the business of the Committee.

05/26 Questions

There were no questions relating to the business of the Committee.

06/26 Public participation

The Authority Solicitor read out a statement which had been received from the Chair of the Swaledale Sheep Breeders Association with regards to concerns about predation by sea eagles:

“Firstly I would like to thank you for attending the meeting at J36 on behalf of the Nat Park, it was also good to see Jane Saxon there from the National Trust. However, it was extremely disappointing that Lifescapes declined the opportunity to engage with a packed room of very concerned farmers and present their own case instead of leaving it to Abie Teward from the NFU. It was also extremely disappointing that no other members of the steering group were present either.

It was clear from the presentations both online and given in person by Ricky Rennie that in parts of the West Coast of Scotland very very significant predation of sheep, not just lambs has been occurring on some farms over a very long period of time. Anyone present could be in no doubt about the truth and validity of these claims, plus the scars on the face of Ricky Rennie's dog after being attacked by a Sea Eagle. As Ricky Rennie confirmed, the Scottish Government, Nature Scot and RSPB Scotland are aware and accept that in certain circumstances Sea Eagles do predate sheep!

There seems to be a narrative being spun that Sea Eagles predominantly eat fish, but from evidence given the other evening there was one nest site where out of twenty bits of prey examined at the nest site only one was fish, in the interests of factual accuracy I should point out that this particular nest site did not have sheep remains, but as has been even pointed out by Lifescapes themselves some nest sites can have up to thirty percent of prey items being sheep meat. I was personally struck that on those farms that do suffer Sea Eagle predation, had sheep not been there what level of destruction of other species would be taking place?

In the Lorton valley in the Lake District there is a FiPL funded project called the Melbreak Curlew Recovery Project aiming at helping to bring back Curlews, what effect and damage could a marauding Sea Eagle do in that area? which brings me to

the University of Cumbria survey, did that survey look at potential fish stocks in the various lakes, did it look at red list species that maybe put at risk, did it do a comprehensive survey of all numbers of potential prey species and potential for predation of such as the Curlews or even the now famous Ospreys at Bassenthwaite? if not it has been a very un-professional and incomplete survey. Did it look at the potential impacts on hill sheep farming? given that sheep farming is so prevalent in the Lakes, or did it just look at potential nest sites and general food availability, are the coastal waters around west Cumbria deemed as a sustainable food source, what are the make up of fish species and at what water depth do they live??

A further area of concern to me and other farmers is the way the survey results are being spun and put out in press releases and stories suggesting seventy eight percent of Cumbrians are supportive, we are also aware that presumably Lifescapes are supplying this information to Parish Councils, but as said earlier would not come to present their own case to a farmer meeting. If you look at the mail drop that was sent out approximately twenty one and a half thousand households there was less than ten percent of people responded just over nineteen hundred if I remember with two hundred and eighty five against, so the figures could easily and legitimately be presented as out of over twenty one and a half thousand surveys sent out only around eight percent were in favour which puts a totally different slant on the figures. Given the mail drop contained no mention of possible sheep predation it was a completely mis leading questionnaire and highlights what many farmers are now thinking that all this is very underhand.

It must be remembered that the Lake District is a World Heritage Site and that the reason it became a World Heritage Site is Hill Farming, without Hill Farming there would NOT have been a World Heritage Site!!! So are the Park going to carry out the necessary Heritage Impact Assessments and if so when?? We would be grateful for an answer on this asap. The Park must also be aware that if this project were to go ahead and there is significant predation of sheep flocks just what sort of bad publicity and backlash could be expected, that is without the, perish the thought, issue of a pet dog being attacked.

I would be grateful if this letter is forwarded for to [be] read out at the next board meeting and that it is forwarded to the steering group

Signed by Mr Cockbain acting on behalf of the Swaledale Sheep Breeders association”.

The Authority Chair provided the following response to the statement:

“Thank you for your email dated 27th February 2026.

As you are aware, the Authority’s key role on the White Tailed Eagle Steering Group is to support the facilitation of engagement with stakeholders including farmers, and contribute to the process to learn whether reintroduction of this species is possible or not. Any decision as to whether reintroduction should occur or not can only be made once it is understood if it is feasible and supported by the community. Currently, no decision has been taken to progress to reintroduction, and Members will be involved in that decision for us.

The Steering Group is following those processes set out by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in their species reintroduction guidance
Such processes include:

- (1) An assessment of the suitability of the landscape for White-Tailed Eagles. This has concluded the landscape is suitable with adequate wild-food provision.
- (2) An assessment of the community social acceptance towards reintroduction. For this the Steering Group has commissioned a Social Feasibility Study, to try to gauge public opinion as to whether this species should be reintroduced or not. For our part we have tried hard to ensure the consultation exercise has been extensive and inclusive, particularly to ensure voices from the farming community are heard, appreciating that there are serious concerns from some, hence our officers’ attendance at the Junction 36 event. The project is now seeking further feedback from stakeholder organisations, including those representing farming

and land managing interests, and this is to be welcomed. Alongside other sheep associations and the NFU, I understand the Swaledale Sheep Breeders Association has been contacted directly to contribute to this further consultation.

The Authority is also sponsoring further engagement supporting the Steering Group to meet with farmers and land managers to explore if and how a co-existence plan could be collectively created, establishing what, if any, measures and responses could satisfactorily address concerns raised by stakeholders. We anticipate this to be completed by the end of June 2026.

- (3) The final stage includes an appraisal of the likely ecological impact of White Tailed Eagle. This will help the project understand its impact on protected sites and species. Concerns about Curlew, Osprey and freshwater fish have been passed to the project team and will be included in the ecological impact assessment.

Given we are a World Heritage Site, a Heritage Impact Assessment is also being prepared, which, amongst other elements will include an assessment of an impact on upland hill farming as it relates to the features of the World Heritage Site. I know you have personally offered to review the first draft, and this is to be warmly welcomed. The completed Heritage Impact Assessment will be available by the end of April 2026”.

07/26 Appointment of Members

Secretary of State Appointees

Members noted the appointment of Miss Juliet Bailey as a Secretary of State (National) Member to fill the remaining vacant position.

08/26 Chief Executive's update

Funding settlement and financial position

The Chief Executive highlighted confirmation of Defra's grant for 2026/27, noting that early confirmation had enabled the Authority to prepare its budget with greater certainty. Although the revenue settlement remained flat cash and therefore represented a real-terms reduction, he advised that the overall package was better than had been anticipated in the autumn. In particular, Members were advised that the capital allocation for the coming year, together with indicative allocations for the following two years, and the move to a three-year settlement provided a more stable basis for forward planning.

Annual review meeting with Defra

The Chief Executive also reported on the recent annual review meeting with Defra, at which the Authority's contribution to national protected landscape targets, work for communities and place, delivery for the World Heritage Site, progress towards 30 by 30, and financial resilience had all been examined. He advised that Defra had been very positive about the Authority's performance and delivery over the last year, whilst also signalling that future use of capital funding, while continuing to support financial resilience and income generation, should increasingly contribute directly to nature recovery and 30 by 30 outcomes.

Policy and operational updates

In responding to questions, the Chief Executive and officers provided updates on a number of policy and operational matters referenced in the written report.

Members sought clarification on the circulation of the recent housing letter, the timetable for the visitor services review, lessons arising from policy developments in Wales on second homes, the potential tension between nature recovery and World Heritage Site objectives, opportunities to strengthen youth engagement in decision-making, progress on the strategic visitor management action plan for the coming season, and the timing and adequacy of consultation on white-tailed eagle reintroduction.

Officers confirmed that the housing correspondence would be circulated, that a visitor services report would come forward in September, that work on reconciling nature and cultural landscape objectives was ongoing, and that further thought would be given to how younger voices could be more directly involved. Members also emphasised the importance of full ecological information and continued Member involvement before the Authority formed its own position on white-tailed eagle reintroduction.

Decided: Members noted the update on key topics since the last meeting.

09/26 National Parks England

The Authority Chair presented the minutes of the Board meeting held on 20 October and draft minutes of the Board meeting held on 11 December 2025.

The Chair added that the most recent National Parks England Board meeting, hosted in the Lake District, had included updates on the Protected Landscapes Partnership, the Office for Environmental Protection's work on protected landscapes, and research being undertaken by the Campaign for National Parks into National Park governance.

Decided: Members noted the minutes of the National Parks England meetings held on 20 October and 11 December 2025.

10/26 Lake District National Park Partnership

My Walter presented the notes from the meeting held on 5 November 2025 and draft notes from the Partnership meeting held on 2 February 2026.

Mr Walter reported briefly on the most recent Partnership meeting, explaining that it had considered feedback on the draft Partnership Plan from communities, partners and stakeholders, discussed minor amendments to objectives and actions, and reviewed the detail of actions for the coming two years. He described the meeting as productive and constructive and advised that the final Partnership Plan would be brought to the next Authority meeting for approval.

Decided: Members noted the notes of the Lake District National Park Partnership meetings held on 5 November 2025 and 2 February 2026.

11/26 Minutes of Committees

The Minutes of the meetings of the following Committees were laid separately before the meeting and in respect of each Committee it was agreed that the Minutes should be approved and recommendations relating to the functions not delegated to a Committee should be confirmed.

a. **Resources Committee**

Mr Jackson presented the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2025.

b. **Park Strategy and Vision Committee**

Mr Walter presented the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2025.

c. **Governance Committee**

Ms Drake presented the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2025.

d. **Development Control Committee**

Mr Kidd presented the minutes of the meetings held on 3 December 2025 and 4 February 2026.

He relayed his appreciation at having two new Members join the Committee.

12/26 Member representation on outside bodies and partnerships

There were no verbal updates regarding representation on outside bodies and partnerships.

13/26 Appointment of Members to serve on Committees

The Chair presented the report inviting Members to appoint Members to serve on its Committees from 25 March 2026 until 30 June 2026.

New Committee appointments comprised:

- Ms Boak and Mrs Lancaster to Development Control
- Miss Bailey to Resources

Decided: Members agreed to the appointments to Standing Committees, serving from 25 March 2026 until 30 June 2026.

14/26 2026-2027 Business Plan

The CEO presented a report outlining the proposed Business Plan for 2026-2027 and a summary of LDNPA corporate and Business Plan risks.

In presenting the report, the Chief Executive advised that the proposed Business Plan reflected Members' earlier discussions on priorities and had been reformatted to provide a clearer, more action-focused one-year plan. He explained that the revised format would assist monitoring and accountability, although further work was needed during the year to improve the way the cost of individual actions was expressed and to reconnect the plan more clearly to the Authority's financial systems and longer-term planning assumptions.

Members welcomed the clearer format and acknowledged the significant work undertaken to produce the Plan. Discussion focussed on how future reports might better show progress against the current year's Plan alongside proposals for the next year, the need to retain a clear line of sight between the Business Plan and wider financial planning, and the importance of allowing actions to remain visibly off-track where external events prevented delivery so that lessons could be learnt. Members also highlighted the value of the youth engagement programme, the need for the Plan to remain flexible in response to changing external circumstances, and the opportunity to use recently confirmed capital funding imaginatively in future years to support both resilience and strategic ambition.

The Chair thanked Catherine Slater and other team members for their work in producing the report and Members for their previous input which had shaped the new single year Business Plan format.

Decided:

- a. Members approved the 2026-2027 Business Plan shown in Annex 2, and the key corporate and Business Plan risks shown in Annex 4, subject to any amendments arising from today's meeting and resource considerations during the service planning process; and
- b. Members delegated authority to the Chief Executive to make any final changes to the Business Plan, and risk document, before they are published.

The meeting was adjourned for a ten-minute break 11:10 and reconvened at 11:20.

**15/26 2026/27 Capital and revenue budgets, capital strategy, and
medium-term financial strategy 2026/27-2030/31**

The CEO presented a paper outlining the LDNPA Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2026/27 for approval. In addition, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS, including the Capital Strategy) to 2030/31 was also presented for approval.

The Chief Executive introduced the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and proposed 2026/27 budgets, explaining that the position was materially stronger than had been anticipated earlier in the year owing to confirmation of the Defra grant settlement, indicative capital allocations over a three-year period, and a more favourable outcome from the triennial pension valuation. Members were advised that the Authority now had a balanced revenue budget for the first three years of the Strategy, with a more significant savings requirement emerging only in years four and five, largely because no assumption had been made about continuing capital support or pension refunds beyond the current indicative period.

In discussion, Members emphasised the importance of using the improved short- to medium-term position prudently and not allowing the organisation to become structurally dependent on resources that might not continue beyond the three-year period. Particular attention was given to the need to bring forward proposals for the unallocated capital resources in a way that balanced support for financial resilience and income generation with direct benefits for nature recovery. Members also noted

that the stronger settlement created opportunities but stressed the need to plan carefully for longer-term uncertainty.

Decided:

- a Members noted the risks and opportunities set out in the report and the basis of preparation of the budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- b Members approved the revenue budget for 2026/27 and capital programme for 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 1 and the supporting annexes.
- c Members approved the revenue and capital MTFS projections from 2027/28 and 2030/31 including the capital strategy; and
- d Members authorised the Section 151 Officer to make any adjustments to the budgets or MTFS in the light of the decisions at (a) to (c).

16/26 Treasury management strategy, prudential indicators, and minimum revenue provision policy strategy statement – 2026/27

The Head of Resources explained that, in addition to revenue and capital budgets presented elsewhere on this agenda, the Authority must also approve a Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) and Prudential Indicators (PIs) before the start of each financial year. The Head of Resources presented a report that outlined the relevant documents for approval.

The Head of Resources advised that the strategy continued the existing cautious approach to the deposit of surplus cash, with most funds placed into a triple A-rated money market fund.

Member discussion focussed principally on cash management and forecasting. In particular, Members asked about the likely peak level of cash balances during the year and suggested that, as the Authority considered potentially more ambitious investment decisions in future, greater emphasis should be placed on cash flow forecasting and understanding the timing of receipts, expenditure and available headroom. Officers confirmed that this was a helpful point and that sufficient counterparty capacity was already in place for anticipated cash levels.

Decided:

- a Members approved the Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/27 as set out in Annex 1;
- b Members approved the Prudential Indicators for 2026/27 as set out in Annex 2;
- c Members approved the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement set out at Annex 3; and
- d Members authorised the Section 151 Officer to adjust the TMS or PRs required because of changes to the proposed capital or revenue budgets elsewhere on this agenda.

17 Proposed governance arrangements

Having considered the current committee arrangements, the Committee Chairs wished to make proposals for change. These were presented to Members by the Deputy Chair of Authority.

It was explained that, if agreed, these revised arrangements would require changes to the Authority Handbook. The report and its attached annexes set out the proposed Committee structure and the consequential revisions to Authority Handbook documents.

The proposals to revise the Authority's governance arrangements followed concerns about duplication of discussion between committees and Authority, the burden of repeated in-person meetings, and the difficulty this created for wider participation, including by newer, younger or more geographically distant Members.

The principal proposals were to increase the frequency of Authority meetings and to convert the Park Strategy and Vision Committee and the Resources Committee into online working groups that would inform and recommend but not take formal decisions. These Meetings would retain their existing core memberships initially although all Members would be able to join and engage with debates that were of particular interest.

Members generally supported the direction of travel and considered the proposals a sensible attempt to reduce duplication, improve accessibility and create greater opportunity for wider Member involvement. Discussion covered the implications of working groups not being able to take formal decisions, the importance of maintaining transparency and clear communication, practical issues concerning attendance, calendars and timing of meetings, and whether sufficient time should be allowed before any formal review of the new arrangements. Officers and the Authority Solicitor confirmed the legal constraints governing remote decision-making and the need for all formal decisions to remain with the Authority when meetings were held online.

Decided:

- a Members considered and adopted from 1 April 2026 the revised Committee Structure and the Authority Handbook documents at Annexes 1 to 4; and
- b Members authorised the Authority Solicitor to make any consequential adjustments to the Authority Handbook.

(The meeting concluded at 12:12)