



Chief Executive's update

Recommendation:

- a **The Authority is asked to note the update on key topics since the last meeting.**

75th Anniversary

- 1 2026 marks the 75th Anniversary of the designation of the UK's first four National Parks in the Peak District, Lake District, Dartmoor and Eryri. This landmark will form the theme of many of our local events throughout the year, but we have also joined with the other national parks who were designated to in 1951 to celebrate at a national level.
- 2 The four national parks have commissioned an independent report to celebrate the successes and achievements of the parks since designation, reflect on current challenges and opportunities and offer some recommendations on how National Parks best serve and be served into the future. The report will be launched at a celebration event hosted in the Peak District on the 15 July. The celebration event will also feature speakers on behalf of Government, the Protected Landscapes Partnership and from the National Parks themselves.

Chinese visit

- 3 As we enter the final year of our partnership agreement with the Giant Panda National Park in China, we hosted a further visit from Chinese Local

Government Officials and National Park Administrators in April.

- 4 The visit focussed on the planning system and how it is used to control development and limit environmental damage within a National Park setting, as well as access improvements and opening up the National Park for recreational use, and finally on agri-environment subsidies and how they can be used to shape environmental outcomes.
- 5 Discussions on the format and function of a future partnership are underway between Chinese officials, the FCDO, Defra, and National Parks with a focus on elevating the partnership up to be a national level agreement and to engage with a wider set of Chinese and UK National Parks.

Bluebird K7 Festival

- 6 Following Authority approval of the Bluebird K7 and K3 byelaw exemption application, the Bluebird K7 Festival took place between the 11-17 May. The exemption application involved considerable time and efforts from our Ranger Service and Commercial Services Teams, particularly Sara Spicer, Area Ranger. The Coniston Water byelaw exemption approval was subject to 12 conditions, which included 6 pre-event conditions being complied with. The event was based at Coniston Boating Centre. During the week, the Lake Ranger Team had two patrol boats on the water each day. Each boat was staffed by two Lake Rangers and two volunteers. Their role was to monitor the event and make sure the exemption conditions were complied with.
- 7 The event was well attended with several thousands of people attending each day to watch from Coniston Boating Centre, and the shoreline near Coniston Hall. Overall, the event was well organised. The Water Safety team ran things effectively, listened to feedback and made improvements as the week went on, despite having to deal with challenging weather and mechanical problems. Bluebird K7 was on the water most days, although it made fewer runs than planned because of these issues. Blue Bird K3 also took part. Friday was the

most successful day, with both boats running, and Bluebird K7 reaching a speed of 100mph.

- 8 The traffic management plan worked well, and there were no noticeable problems despite the increased traffic in the area. We will be meeting with the organisers to review the event and will also look at the feedback collected from attendees completed questionnaires.

Pathfinder

- 9 Our proposal for a Lake District National Park Authority 'Pathfinder' pilot has been removed from the Pathfinder programme by Defra. Defra praised the quality of the submission (which aimed to bring better alignment and reduce administrative burden and regulation across Defra bodies working with each other within the Lake District). However, they were concerned with the capacity for the team to make substantive progress on the issues we had identified prior to Defra separate 'Uplands Experiment' (work led by Hilary Cottam) commencing in the Autumn of this year. Defra were concerned that the two projects would end up overlapping with each other and that resources would be better concentrated on the Uplands pilot.

Wild Deer Management Strategy

- 10 The Lake District Wild Deer Management Stakeholder event at Rheged on 21st May marked the launch of a new five-year strategy developed by key partners including the Lake District National Park Authority, Natural England, Forestry Commission, Forestry England, National Trust and others. The strategy promotes an evidence-led, collaborative and adaptive approach to deer management, bringing together landowners, environmental organisations, stalkers and deer experts. While red and roe deer are an important part of the Lake District's natural and cultural heritage, growing populations are causing significant damage to woodlands and sensitive

habitats through browsing and trampling, preventing tree regeneration and reducing biodiversity.

- 11 The strategy focuses on five main themes: communication, collaboration, data and evidence, adaptability, and development of a Lake District venison brand. The event also included updates on Defra's Policy Statement on the management of wild deer, Forestry Commission funding for deer management, and how our Lake District FiPL programme is supporting projects including deer management training (11 Lake District stalkers received their DSC1 certification), thermal equipment, and drone surveys. RSPB shared findings from the Haweswater deer drone impact research (thermal drone partly funded through FiPL), and the final session explored how the developing Lake District Wild Venison Brand could support a stronger local market for traceable, high-quality venison while contributing to responsible deer population management and sustainable land use.

Visitor Management

- 12 A scorching May bank holiday, coinciding with school half term, resulted in significant visitor pressures being experienced in several places within the National Park, and indeed, nationally as reported in the national media. Cumbria's SVMG undertook three joint enforcement patrols, together with many individual organisational patrols, including through our own Visitor Management Officers and Area Rangers. The adequacy of certain Area Action Plans has been reviewed and updated, including at Wasdale, Stonethwaite, and at Castlerigg Stone Circle. SVMG Gold continues to meet every three weeks and receives regular updates from the various Tactical Groups.

Active Travel

- 13 We have recently been awarded £200,000 from Active Travel England to develop priority schemes in our Network Plan approved last year. This funding

will enable us to survey, design and consult on schemes so that they are ready for delivery should capital funding opportunities arise. We have identified further development of active travel projects at West Windermere Way, Thirlmere East Shore, Bassenthwaite cycleway, and Wasdale bridleways. In addition, funding will be used for developing a study on country lanes, monitoring user numbers, opportunities for staff & stakeholder training, and a joint collaboration project with other English National Parks.

Access for All

- 14 We have been allocated £167,000 Access for All funding as part of our capital grant from Defra for 2026/27. This will enable us to deliver projects that create or improve access in the National Park. We are currently evaluating priorities for spending according to our existing Network Plan, benefits to users of all ability and deliverability of projects.

Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI)

- 15 After completing the consolidation and conservation of the Western Range at Lowther Castle, the Lowther Estate has been given a further £255,407 from the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) fund to conserve the inner terrace at Lowther Castle. The work is anticipated to take a year and will result in a further site being removed from the Heritage at Risk Register. We have also been successful in gaining £211,545 from the same fund for the Stepping Into History project. Over the next five years this project aims to restore and enhance the distinctive boundary vernacular and access infrastructure at the eastern edge of the National Park, including stepping stones, stone step stiles and replace a bridge in the eastern area of the National Park. We will condition survey and repair historic dry-stone wall boundaries and engage local communities in archaeological survey and excavation. The LEI is a grant scheme for reducing the impact of existing electricity transmission lines.

Underground Visual Amenity

- 16 Since 2005 we have been working in partnership with Scottish Power Electricity Northwest and Friends of the Lake District, through the Undergrounding for Visual Amenity scheme, to mitigate the visual impact of electricity infrastructure in the National Park. Since 2017, the scheme has undergrounded more than 25 km of intrusive overhead wires.
- 17 The current round of funding for £3.72 million has removed lines at Thompson Ground (near Hawkshead), Mungrisedale, Newlands Road in Braithwaite, as well as stretches of overhead wires at Meathop and Ulpha. The current round of funding also includes a scheme, planned for 2027, to remove 4 km of electricity wires and poles from Blawith and Torver Common. This scheme is being combined with the “Worst Served Customer” programme to bring about climate resilience to electricity supply, by undergrounding, to remove the effects of future storms impacting Coniston and Ambleside. Currently, we are working with Scottish Power Electricity Northwest to plan how to sensitively remove wires and poles from the Common and improve the visual amenity across the landscape.

Greenside Mines

- 18 We submitted a National Lottery Heritage Fund application in May for “Lead, Levels and Lives: the story of Greenside Mine” – a project that will conserve Greenside Lead Mine and take it off the Heritage at Risk register. We will also install interpretation, undertake an educational programme work with the local schools, nature recovery and water improvements and a programme of community engagement. The overall total project costs are just under £1.4 million. We will hear whether we have been successful in the first development phase in September.

Wildlife Rich Habitat Fund

- 19 On 25th May we secured £860,000 of Defra's £10million Wildlife Rich Habitat Fund (WRHF), for distribution to organisations and land managers who have spade-ready projects ready to deliver quick wins for nature. The funding is intended to unlock delivery of wildlife-rich habitat creation or restoration across the National Park. Eligibility requirements are very specific, so officers are now working through a pipeline of possible projects submitted by partner organisations and others. These cover a range of habitats: hay meadows, ponds, traditional orchards, upland oakwood, reedbed, wildlife-rich scrub, hedgerows and blanket bog.
- 20 The funding is required to be managed via the existing Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) framework and is being integrated into our delivery of this Programme. However, the Fund is a separate funding pot (similar to the previous Historic Buildings Restoration Grant). Projects are able to take advantage of both FiPL funding and the WRHF simultaneously if their project involves multiple elements that fit the different funding criteria.
- 21 Critically funding must be spent in year and is only for capital expenditure, therefore it will not suit all parties. The WRHF totals £30million over three years, with allocations for each Protected Landscape confirmed each year. We are working up a pipeline of future projects that may not be ready to deliver this year, but could be ready in 2027/8 or 2028/29, alongside supporting projects through to delivery this year.

2026 RTPi North West Awards

- 22 We have been shortlisted for a 2026 North West Award by the Royal Town Planning Institute for our work on the Higham Whole Estate Plan. Under the category 'Excellence in Plan Making Practice', our entry was commended for collaborative partnership working with Crosby Granger Architects. The plan provides an innovative example of landscape-scale planning, establishing a

long-term spatial strategy for a 1,170-acre rural estate. Through analysis of land-use, heritage assets, biodiversity and rural economics, the plan identifies opportunities for sustainable diversification, nature recovery and community benefit. Its action plan sets out measurable projects including heritage reuse, visitor infrastructure, woodland enhancement and active travel connections. The plan demonstrates how strategic planning can support resilient rural communities while safeguarding landscapes. The award winners will be announced on 19 June.

Nutrient neutrality

- 23 The Cumbria Catchments Nutrient Neutrality programme is moving into its next phase. Partnership staff from Westmorland and Furness Council, Cumberland Council and Lake District National Park have already overseen the delivery of 443kg of phosphate mitigation across the county, with more in the pipeline. Mitigation delivered so far is from a combination of land use change and non-mains drainage improvements.
- 24 Mitigation credits are expected to go on sale shortly, and a "soft launch" in May has already generated multiple Expressions of Interest.
- 25 Developers will be able to purchase mitigation to offset the phosphate impacts of their developments, removing the need for mitigation to be found by individual builders on a site-by-site basis. This is expected to speed up the planning process and unlock a number of stalled housing developments inside and outside the national park.

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