



Lake District
National Park

Lake District National Park Authority
Authority: 25 March 2026

Agenda Item: 8

Chief Executive's update

Recommendation that:

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

Defra – National Park Grant Funding Settlement

1. Defra have provided a letter of intent confirming their intention to continue our grant funding for the financial year 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027.

The total annual grant award of £6,917,237 to the LDNPA will be allocated as follows:

- Core 26/27 Revenue Funding: £5,151,383*
- Core 26/27 Capital Funding: £1,598,544
- Access 26/27 Capital Funding: £167,310

Details on the specific criteria for core and access capital spend will be included in our grant agreement which will follow.

During 2026/27 Defra have asked that each National Park Authority determine how it can use grant funding to support delivery of the government's priorities for protected landscapes as set out in the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework and Environmental Improvement Plan 2025, particularly commitments to;

- Make land greener, wilder, and more accessible to all, and;

- Increase the contribution that protected landscapes are making to Environment Act and EIP targets, measured through the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

The LDNPA allocation will be formally confirmed via our grant agreement, the funding remains indicative until the point at which a grant agreement is signed.

For future planning purposes Defra have also advised that the 2026/27 allocation should be considered indicative of expected allocations for 2027/28 and 2028/29, but final confirmation of funding will always follow (and be subject to) Defra's annual business planning process each year.

Defra - Place-based Pathfinder and Uplands Transformation Pilot

2. At the 2026 Oxford Farming Conference it was confirmed that both Dartmoor and Cumbria would be taken forward in the Uplands Transformation Pilot work being led by Hilary Cottam. Dartmoor will be progressed first (in early 2026) with Cumbria following towards the end of the calendar year.
3. Defra have also invited a submission from the LDNPA for their Place Based Pathfinder programme. These Pathfinders intend to explore how to optimise the existing Defra delivery system by adopting a place-based approach.

Opportunities to improve could include:

- Developing a more consistent shared vision between Defra bodies and partners at a local level, e.g. align plans / strategies at different scales / timeframes
- Increase integration / consolidation of policy / funding mechanisms to enable funding to be pooled to deliver multiple outcomes more cost-effectively

- Increase integration of public-advice services in place to improve the experience
- Increase clarity from Core Defra on the precise outcomes desired at different spatial scales and what trade-offs should be

We are now in discussion with the Defra team to work out which areas would be best to explore within the Lake District setting and what this may mean in practice.

All Party Parliamentary Group on World Heritage

4. In November 2025 an APPG for World Heritage was established, with the secretariat provided by WH:UK. The focus of the APPG is to influence and encourage action by Government in raising the profile and support for sites in the UK. In December 2025 Steve Ratcliffe attended the APPG chaired by Jonathan Davies, MP for Derbyshire, and spoke on behalf of English World Heritage Sites (WHS) including the Lake District. This second of six sessions, leading up to a debate in Spring 2027, focussed on tourism opportunities and challenges. The session focussed on the importance of resourcing, the need for a national strategy for WHSs and the importance of improved collaboration between individual sites and the State Party.

National Planning Policy Framework Consultation

5. National Parks England has submitted a joint response to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation. In addition, we also submitted a supplementary Lake District response, in particular to that element of the NPPF dealing with World Heritage matters. The main areas of our response are summarised below.
6. Policy weighting: We support overarching efforts to restructure and reword the NPPF for a consistent approach. However, as a result of wording changes

there appears to be a general weakening of approach to conserving and enhancing National Parks that will reduce protections and lead to the degradation of nationally designated protected landscapes. We have asked that this is addressed.

7. Spatial Development Strategies: Included with devolution changes is the government's introduction of new regional plans that will sit above local plans, called 'Spatial Development Strategies'. This means that the new Cumbria Combined Authority will need to produce a spatial development strategy. The draft NPPF consultation guidance recognises the need for combined authorities to engage with national park authorities, but we have asked that this commitment goes further by ensuring this is a specific 'participatory' role rather than on a 'consultee' basis.
8. Settlement boundaries: The draft NPPF proposes a blanket approach to defining settlement boundary criteria across the country. Whilst this may be helpful for a majority of local authorities, it does not recognise the unique nature of National Parks and some rural areas. We have asked that this is reconsidered.
9. Affordable housing: The draft NPPF proposes that payment in lieu of onsite affordable homes be introduced as a blanket approach. We have asked that this be reconsidered. Most or all of our supply comes from smaller sites below the proposed 50 dwelling threshold.
10. World Heritage Sites: We have asked that the NPPF fully acknowledges the complexity and international demands placed on World Heritage Sites compared to other national designated heritage assets. We support reference and policies emphasising World Heritage Sites and their setting being of the highest significance. However, we ask that these are not grouped with locally defined Conservation Areas as the two are very different in terms of international designation and requirements of UNESCO

11. Biodiversity Net Gain: Linked to the NPPF consultation are other proposals from Defra for biodiversity net gain easements. We have taken the opportunity to repeat support for easements that can be linked to a Local Nature Recovery Strategy rather than local planning authority boundaries. We have previously proposed the removal of the spatial multiplier constraining growth of offsite biodiversity net gain in National Parks. Removing this would help accelerate the government's ambitions for Protected Landscapes to be a key driver in meeting the 30x30 target and delivery of the Environmental Improvement Plan.

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

12. In 2025/26, the FiPL programme continued to deliver strong outcomes for farmers, land managers and the wider landscape. We supported 68 projects across the year, with approved spend reaching £1.16 million. This included work with both returning and new applicants (24 new applicants in 2025/26), helping to broaden engagement and deliver environmental, climate and nature benefits across the area.

13. For 2026/27, FiPL has confirmed a project delivery allocation of £1.15 million. Over the next year, we plan to take a more proactive approach by developing six strategic multi-year projects focused on nature delivery, farmland habitats, butterfly conservation, climate-resilient farms, fell-to-fork opportunities and improving access to the farmed landscape. We have also submitted a £1.1 million bid for additional capital funding to enhance wildlife-rich habitat creation, working closely with partners. Defra continues to see FiPL as an effective route for delivering wider capital programmes, and further opportunities may follow.

14. To support the ongoing delivery of FiPL we have extended the contracts of the existing team members and will soon be advertising for an additional fixed-term Farming Officer post from the newly confirmed project funding.

Second homes and holiday lets

15. A letter has recently been sent to Baroness Taylor of Stevenage (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government) re-emphasising the adverse impact second homes and holiday lets are having on many of our communities. We have proposed to the Minister that the Lake District National Park be used as a pilot to launch the new national mandatory registration scheme for short-term lets and also to pilot the introduction of new Use Classes for both holiday lets and second homes. A roundtable meeting to discuss short term lets is being convened by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on 17 March 2026.

SVMG update and preparations for the 2026 season

16. A governance review of SVMG during the winter has led to the establishment of Cumbria's SVMG (Gold) chaired by the Police and with senior representatives from both Councils, LDNPA, Cumbria Tourism, Fire Rescue , LDSAMRA, Enterprising Cumbria, National trust, Forestry England and United Utilities. LDNPA is deputy chair.

17. SVMG (Gold) is supplemented by a number of Tactical Groups (Silver), as follows with various leads identified in: Car Parking, Motorhomes and Toilets group (W&F Council); Enforcement inc PSPOs and litter (Cumberland Council); Transport Disruption (joint Councils lead); Communications (Police); Visitor Safety (Fire and Rescue); and Long term, place based Strategic Group, including VMAPs and AAPs (LDNPA).

An Action Plan for the season is now in development and SVMG is tasked with securing necessary resources (both staffing and financial). Once finalised, this Action Plan will be provided to Members and will form the basis for a seasonal update by our Authority Chair to our Parish and Town Councils ahead of the 2026 season.

Coast to Coast Nature Recovery Corridor

18. We have been awarded £199,000, from National Heritage Lottery Fund, for leading the preparation of pre-development phase work for the Coast to Coast Nature Trail. This allows us to directly employ a project manager, host a data and evidence officer with National Trails UK and an engagement officer with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. Our 15-month project will establish a baseline and framework for the development of a future bid to the National Heritage Lottery Fund, with project partners including North York Moors National Park Authority, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, North Pennines National Landscape, National Trails UK, Natural England and North Yorkshire Council. We will be inviting Westmorland and Furness Council and Cumberland Council to the project partner steering group.

Landscape Connections

19. Landscape Connections is a National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) allocation specifically to help Protected Landscapes. In the case of National Parks, NHLF are encouraging National Park Authorities to bring forward partnership projects in each Protected Landscape. The purpose of the investment programme is to put landscapes into recovery by supporting habitats, species and rich cultural heritage whilst removing barriers to access to nature. The fund offers up to £10million per each successful applicant, covering a two-year development phase and up to eight years of delivery. Following dialogue with local stakeholders and discussion with the team at NHLF, we submitted an expression of interest (EOI) in December 2025 for a full £10million allocation.

20. Our EOI outlined a broad concept of creating a 'one-team approach' to farm advice which would help unlock more farmer-led action to delivery of nature recovery – the need for this project has been identified through the existing Partnership Plan and securing the funding will signal a significant contribution

to delivering the ambitions of our emerging Partnership Plan. Just before Christmas, we heard the exciting news that HLF would like to invite us to submit a full application.

21. The application process will be resource intensive; we anticipate the development of the application will take six months and we will need to secure new temporary resource to help oversee this process to add required additional capacity in the team.

Tour de France

22. In February, The Tour de France confirmed its attendance at various locations in Cumbria in 2027. To celebrate the reveal of the locations, start and finish venues were lit up with yellow light, including the Old Town Hall in Carlisle and the Moot Hall in Keswick. On 2 July 2027, the race will run from Edinburgh to Carlisle, and on 3 July, from Keswick to Liverpool. Our Head of Rangers, Steve Gaskell, is representing the Authority on the Cumbria Tour de France Steering Group. We will be working hard to ensure a lasting legacy from this global event.

Windermere Byelaw Exemption

23. Windermere Motor Boat Racing Club applied for an exemption to Byelaw 12.3 (10 knot limit) to hold five race events on Windermere in 2026 and 2027. Both years included a proposed Sustainable Race Event, showcasing low carbon technologies.
24. The application was reviewed and consulted on with 20 partner organisations. It was assessed against the feedback received and criteria, such as the contribution to the LDNP Vision. Approval has been granted in principle for 2026, subject to 12 conditions. Approval for 2027 is reserved, pending evaluation of the Sustainable Race Event once it has taken place. For applications beyond 2027, the Authority does not expect the Sustainable Race

Event to be identified as a fifth separate event day but rather becomes embedded within “usual” race events.

Author, Post	Gavin Capstick, Chief Executive
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