



Lake District National Park

Authority:17 September 2025

Agenda Item: 11bi

Park Strategy and Vision Committee

MINUTES of a meeting of the Park Strategy and Vision Committee held at the National Park Office, Murley Moss, Kendal at 10.00 am on 10 June 2025.

Present

Mr M F Carter (Chair)
Mr D F Rathbone

Mr P Walter
3 vacancies

Also in attendance

Chair of the Authority: Ms T Hunt MBE

Apologies Received

Mr J Jackson
Ms S Mosner

Mr R Outhwaite

No Apologies Received

Mr M P Brereton

Mr A Pratt

21/25 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr J Jackson, Mr R Outhwaite and Ms Sabine Mosner.

22/25 Minutes

Decided: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

23/25 Chair's Announcements

The 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 informed Members that, as he would be leaving the Authority, he had invited Members to come forward if they were interested in the position of Chair. Peter Walker was the only Member to respond. The Chair reiterated that other Members were still able to stand if they had a proposer and seconder.

24/25 Declarations of Interest

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

25/25 Questions

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

26/25 Public Participation

There were no questions, petitions or deputations of a general nature relating to the business of the Committee.

27/25 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLOTf)

The Team Leader for Strategy and Environment presented a report outlining LDNPA progress establishing three apportioned targets for the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF).

This report focused on the development and integration of interim outcome targets for protected landscapes, specifically within the Lake District National Park, as part of a broader national framework. The Government has set ten overarching environmental targets, and three of these—peatland restoration (Target 7), woodland canopy establishment (Target 8), and the creation of wildlife-rich habitats outside designated sites (Target 1)—have been apportioned to protected landscapes. The purpose of the report was to confirm these interim targets, which will be published on the LDNPA website in July and later incorporated into the 2026–2031 Partnership Plan.

The Team Leader expressed confidence in achieving Targets 7 and 8 due to existing project pipelines, targets agreed with Partners in 2020, and recent data, such as the 245 hectares of woodland creation reported by the Forestry Commission. However, concerns were raised about the feasibility of Target 1, which requires establishing 914 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat annually until 2042. This figure was derived from a proportional apportionment process led by Natural England and consultants using national datasets, but it may not reflect local deliverability.

Member discussion highlighted the need for ongoing dialogue with Natural England to refine these targets based on realistic capabilities and the monitoring of outcomes. Questions from members also emphasised the importance of having a clear process for revising targets over time and integrating them into the Partnership’s monitoring framework.

Decided:

- a. Members noted the progress made on developing the Lake District National Park Partnership’s apportionment for the Protected Landscapes Targets and

Outcomes Framework targets 1, 7 and 8 (Annex 2), and that these provisional targets will be published on our website.

- b. Members noted that the final targets will be included within the Partnership's Plan 2026-2031.

28/25 Higham Whole Estate Plan

The Strategy Planner presented a report seeking endorsement from Members of the Higham Whole Estate Plan, put forward by Crosby Granger Architects on behalf of Higham Estate owner, Malcolm Wilson. The Higham Whole Estate Plan sets out the assets of the Estate and the opportunities and threats which the estate may encounter and describes plans for the future.

The Higham Whole Estate Plan, a non-statutory strategic document was developed collaboratively with input from the Lake District National Park Authority. It aims to balance private ambitions with public benefits, including nature recovery, community engagement, and heritage preservation. The estate spans 475 hectares and includes five farmsteads, of which 3 are non-operational. Three farmsteads are historically significant.

The plan was reviewed through multiple iterations between 2024 and 2025, incorporating feedback from the Authority's Partnerships team and the Park Strategy and Vision Committee. A key outcome of this engagement was the inclusion of a detailed action plan. This plan is structured around eight core outcomes, such as enhancing rural enterprise, improving housing and farmstead conditions, and fostering community connections. The Estate's vision emphasises sustainability, economic viability, and a high-quality visitor experience, supported by expert input from ecologists, heritage consultants, and land agents.

Members expressed appreciation for the comprehensive nature of the plan and the Estate's responsiveness to earlier feedback. Concerns were raised about the clarity of future land use, particularly regarding farming practices and the potential shift away from traditional methods. While the Estate has not provided specific details, it was acknowledged that these aspects are still under discussion with tenant farmers and may evolve. The importance of maintaining a holistic approach to Estate development and ensuring that all elements of the plan are pursued—not just the most commercially attractive ones—was emphasised.

In response to a Member's question about the reputational risk to the Authority of not endorsing the Estate Plan, the Director of Sustainable Development explained that the Authority was mitigating reputational risk by demonstrating that the Authority is able to work alongside landowner to bring forward their proposals.

Members also highlighted the need to stress the importance of nature recovery within the Estate's future plans. The endorsement reflects a broader strategy to collaborate with landowners on long-term planning while maintaining oversight and influence through the planning process.

Decided:

- a. Members agreed to endorse the Higham Whole Estate Plan (Annex 1) subject to:
- the commitment of Higham Estate to produce an annual monitoring update for reporting back to this Committee, and
 - the Authority issuing a statement to the Higham Estate outlining the outcome of the decision, and any requirements or/ and areas of concern.

29/25 Farming in Protected Landscapes Year 4 Review 2024/25 and priorities for 2025/26

The Project Manager for Farming in Protected Landscapes in the Lake District National Park (FiPL) presented an update for Members. Year Four of FiPL delivered 101 projects with a project expenditure of £2.1m. In addition, the LDNPA delivered 18 projects with a project expenditure of over £2m for the Historic Buildings Restoration Grants. Following confirmation of Year Five funding the Project Manager was able to provide information about future plans and local priorities.

Since its inception in July 2021, the overall project spend has been £5.62 million, with over £2 million spent in year four. Key achievements include the creation of seven new farm clusters, involvement of 580 farmers and land managers and 191 volunteers in a wide range of environmental and infrastructure improvements such as pond restoration, hedgerow planting, flood-risk reduction and dry-stone wall repairs. Notably, a one-off grant of £2.1 million enabled the restoration of 18 traditional farm buildings.

The Project Manager highlighted efforts to improve outreach and engagement, particularly with harder-to-reach farmers, through the use of the infographic (Annex 2) with relevant project statistics and a QR code linking to the FiPL website. Several case studies were presented to illustrate the diversity and impact of the projects, including the creation of a bridleway at Threlkeld; support for the Herdwick Sheep Breeders' Association Gene bank (HSBA Gene Bank); and the restoration of a pre-1750 cruck barn. These examples demonstrated how FiPL funding supports both environmental goals and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Members praised the programme's effectiveness, noting its broad range of benefits and the positive impact on the farming community. They acknowledged the challenge of balancing public benefits with direct support for farmers, especially amid ongoing changes to agricultural subsidies. The programme's collaborative approach, including a diverse funding panel and partnerships with other protected landscapes, was seen as a key strength.

Members also appreciated the leadership role the Lake District team has taken in regional coordination and knowledge sharing, with their hosting of a monthly Northern Protected Landscapes group.

Looking ahead, the Project Manager explained that funding for year five has returned to previous levels (£1.1 million), following a significant increase in year four. While this represents a reduction from the previous year's exceptional funding, it is still

considered a success, particularly as it provides a bridge to a potential three-year funding settlement. However, the future of FiPL remains uncertain, pending Government budget decisions. The Director of Sustainable Development emphasised the importance of continuing to advocate for the programme's value and its alignment with national environmental and agricultural priorities.

Finally, the discussion turned to the role of farm clusters in promoting collaboration and nature-friendly farming. These clusters, supported by FiPL, bring farmers together for training, social engagement, and shared learning. They have led to the formation of community interest companies and landscape-scale initiatives, such as those in West Lakes and Ullswater. Members agreed that these efforts are central to the programme's success and should be more widely communicated to highlight the National Park's commitment to supporting sustainable farming and nature recovery.

Decided:

- a. Members noted the highlight reporting in Annex1 on the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme in Year 4 (2024/25) and local priorities for Year 5.
- b. Members noted the FiPL infographic in Annex 2.

(The meeting finished at 10:53)