

**National Parks England
Board Meeting**
Minutes of the meeting held on
Monday 20th October 2025
In-person and online meeting

In Attendance		
<p>Directors Ken Smith (KS) Andrea Davies (AD) Harry Blathwayt (HB) Denis Mullan (DM) Victoria Mander (VM) Derek Twine (DT) Jim Bailey (JB) Will Dracup (WD) Tiffany Hunt (THu) Vanessa Rowlands (Chair) (VR)</p> <p>Officers Alison Baxter (Public Affairs Manager) (ABx)</p>	<p>NPOs/ Chief Executives Phil Mulligan (PM) Sarah Bryan (SB) Rob Thomas (RT) Tony Gates (TG) Alison Barnes (ABa) David Butterworth (DB) Tom Hind (THi)</p>	<p>NPA Peak District NPA Exmoor NPA Broads Authority Northumberland NPA New Forest NPA Yorkshire Dales NPA North York Moors NPA Dartmoor NP Lake District NPA South Downs NPA</p>

Item	
1	<p>Apologies & Intros</p> <p>Apologies were received from John Packman, Kevin Bishop, Sion McGeever, Gavin Capstick</p>
2	<p>Minutes</p> <p>2.1 Approve minutes from the meeting held on 23 September 2025.</p> <p>Approved, no amendments.</p> <p>Decision: Minutes of 23 September 2025 were approved</p>
3	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>THi: No matters arising were notified.</p>
4	<p>Urgent Business notified to the Company Secretary</p> <p>THi - no urgent business was raised</p>



5	<p>Chair's Report</p> <p>VR welcomed Victoria Mander to her first meeting as Chair of the New Forest NPA.</p> <p>VR thanked the Board and staff for their work alongside the National Landscapes Association, Campaign for National Parks and other organisations on the Protected Landscapes duty. The potential for this legislation to be repealed has significantly diminished as a result of everyone's efforts, which is testament to positive relationship building and collaboration.</p> <p>VR advised NPE has increased its external communications thanks to Tom Marshall being in post as Comms lead, and she is focusing on providing additional information to Directors via more regular catch ups and emails.</p>
6	<p>Discussion Session: NPE Organisational Design and Strategy, follow-up to 23 September discussions.</p> <p>THi shared a graphic prepared by David Bence and gave a presentation which summarised the current position, points of alignment and points for discussion following from the meeting on 23 September 2025.</p> <p>VR noted that the paper submitted by RT supports the current legal structure of a company limited by guarantee. Directors discussed matters regarding the governance structure of NPE, operating model and recruitment for the role of a Lead NPE Officer. VR recommended that a small task and finish group be established to consider the governance of NPE but felt strongly that recruitment must proceed to create the capacity within NPE to fulfil its core purpose and priorities.</p> <p>Decision: that a small task and finish group be created to explore the future governance of NPE.</p> <p>Decision: approved the recommendation to proceed with the recruitment of a NPE lead member of staff, pending consideration of a draft job description and person specification.</p> <p>Action: THi to draft JD/PS with the Board.</p>
7	<p>Unlocking Private Finance in National Parks</p> <p>DB presented the summary paper prepared by DB, KB and GC, outlining the findings of the consultant's report (Appendix 1) on attracting private finance investment into NPAs.</p> <p>SB advised on her discussion regarding the content with Professor Dieter Helm, as mentioned in the paper. He raised the point that NPAs need to secure sustainable government funding first, with private sector income as complementary.</p> <p>A discussion took place on the recommendations in the report. There was particular concern highlighted regarding the capacity of NPAs and NPE to undertake a detailed pieces of work on this at this time. Directors commented that there is a need to undertake a cost/ benefit assessment to consider which pieces of work should be taken forward.</p>

	<p>HB raised that he has had a meeting with Alastair Carmichael MP, Chair of the EFRA Committee, who is seeking topics for possible enquiries. The issue of protected landscape funding and private finance could be such a topic.</p> <p>Action: NPE secretariat to draw up possible scope/ lines of inquiry for a possible EFRA committee hearing to present to Alastair Carmichael MP.</p> <p>Decision: Recommendation 1</p> <p>The actions on part 4 of the report were noted. THi indicated it was unlikely he would have time to work with KB on an offer for health insurers at this time.</p> <p>Decision: Recommendation 2</p> <p>Directors noted the work on Visitor Levies and Charges</p> <p>Decision: Recommendation 3 and 4</p> <p>Directors decided not to accept these recommendations.</p> <p>Recommendations 3 and 4 should form the basis of a proposal on a topic of discussion for the EFRA Committee.</p>
8	<p>Farming in England's National Parks</p> <p>ABx and THi presented the paper written by KB and Sue Fletcher, and explained that Defra's ongoing discussions about a role in Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier and potential local advice pilots offer a timely opportunity to refresh the 2018 paper, Farming in the English National Parks. A new paper at this time will allow us to be proactive in shaping policy.</p> <p>There was a discussion regarding collaborating on the paper with the National Landscapes Association (NLA) and at which stage in development to involve Directors. ABa stressed the need to highlight commoning more prominently in the report and SB requested that more diverse voices are brought into the thinking during its preparation.</p> <p>Directors agreed the following approach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officers to undertake the initial drafting. 2. Involve Directors in a working group should the draft include greater policy changes, though this will not be necessary should the new report be a light touch refresh of current policy. 3. Bring a final version to the Board in early 2026 for sign off. <p>Decision: the recommendations in the paper were accepted.</p>
9	<p>AOB – none raised.</p>



Summary of Actions from this meeting	
1	THi – Draw up a brief for the EFRA Committee
2	ABx – co-ordinate drafting of refreshed Farming in England’s National Parks Paper
3	THi to share a revised JD/PS for further discussion.

Next Board meeting: 11 December 2025 (online)

