



Lake District
National Park

Authority: 24 June 2026

Agenda Item: 10c

Resources Committee

MINUTES of a meeting of the Resources Committee held at the National Park Office, Wayfaring House, Murley Moss Business Park, Kendal at 10.00 am on 26 February 2026.

Present

Mr J Jackson (Chair)	Ms S Mosner
Mr M Hatton	Mr P Walter
	2 vacancies

Also in attendance

Chair of the Authority: Ms T Hunt MBE

Apologies

Mr Brereton

Ms Boak

Mr Clark

No apologies received

Ms J Drake

01/26 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Brereton, Mr Clark and Ms Boak.

The Chair noted that the meeting was not quorate and that no decisions could be made. The Authority Solicitor confirmed that all agenda items were for note only and that Committee minutes would be prepared in the usual way. It was explained that if

it was felt that a decision was required, a recommendation should be made to Authority where the matter could be decided.

02/26 Minutes

Decided: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

03/26 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. It was advised that photographs taken from the livestream may be used in press reports.

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

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

07/26 Draft 2026 – 2027 Business Plan

The Head of People and Organisational Development presented the proposed Business Plan for the Authority for 2026-2027. It included an updated Organisational Strategy, and a summary of key corporate risks and the risks to delivery of the Business Plan. Members were reminded that this was the final opportunity for the Resources Committee to comment before the Plan is presented to Authority for approval.

Significant changes made since the initial draft in December 2025, including:

- Alignment of the Plan with the updated organisational vision and the six key priorities for the Authority identified from the Lake District National Park Partnership Plan.
- Removal of the previous hierarchy between “key actions” and “additional key actions”; all milestones are now presented as “actions,” resulting in a simplified set of 55 actions grouped under key areas of work.
- A shift toward a clearer one-year plan format focused on developmental or transformative activity rather than business as usual tasks.
- Initial inclusion of FTE estimates for each action, with the possibility of switching to “days” following Member feedback.
- Minor updates to risk descriptions but no new risks proposed.

Members welcomed the improvements to the structure, clarity and readability of the Plan, and the effort taken to reflect earlier feedback. The following points were raised:

Climate Change Adaptation

- Members expressed concern that climate change adaptation—previously a business plan action—was no longer explicitly referenced.
- It was noted that although no specific action is proposed for the coming year, the absence of any narrative reference could give the misleading impression that the Authority is not engaged in ongoing climate adaptation work.
- Members requested that the Plan contain wording to acknowledge the continued importance of this theme, even where no discrete action is identified.

Strategic horizon-scanning and multi-year perspective

- Members felt there remains a gap between the five-year Partnership Plan, the Authority’s one-year Business Plan, and the broader strategic, policy and horizon scanning work undertaken by senior officers.
- Members emphasised the importance of protecting time and visibility for this forward-looking strategic work, which risks being crowded out during periods of operational pressure.
- It was suggested that a separate mechanism or document may be required to capture this thinking, provide a place for updates, and support accountability.

Signposting and external readability

- Members highlighted the need for clearer signposting to the Partnership Plan so that readers can understand where certain priorities are being delivered outside the Authority's own Business Plan.
- Concerns were raised about "blank" areas in the action tables—for example UNESCO and other topics—where narrative links may be required to avoid the impression of inaction.

Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage

- Members asked that greater emphasis be given to cultural heritage and the historic environment, reflecting their importance within the Authority's statutory purposes.
- Members suggested that references could be expanded under relevant sections, including those relating to the World Heritage Site and the cultural landscape.

Linking actions to National Park purposes and duty

- Members proposed that actions should be explicitly connected to the Authority's two statutory purposes and its duty.
- Members felt that visual cues—such as colour-coding or significance rankings—could strengthen internal and external understanding of how actions support core statutory responsibilities.

The Head of People and Organisational Development confirmed that all feedback would be incorporated where feasible.

The Chair requested that, prior to submission to Authority, the final draft and accompanying presentation be shared with the Committee Chair to allow final feedback.

During consideration of the Corporate Business Risks, Members discussed the current position of the risk register and associated updates. Officers advised that no major structural changes had been made to the register and that no new risks had been added. Only minor amendments had been introduced, particularly relating to resource availability and Brockhole.

A Member suggested that, as part of next year's review, there may be scope to streamline the risk register. Some risks—particularly those relating to resource availability—were considered to reflect previous economic conditions and could potentially be consolidated, allowing a sharper focus on organisation specific risks.

Officers acknowledged that the external environment had shifted significantly since the paper was drafted and agreed to revisit the risk assessments before the next Authority meeting.

The CEO confirmed that a new risk register for the Partnership Plan was being developed and would be presented to Members as part of the full suite of documentation before formal consideration by the Partnership.

Decided:

- a Members commented on the draft Business Plan shown in Annex 2, and the key corporate and Business Plan risks shown in Annex 4, in advance of the final Business Plan and risks being presented to Authority on 25 March 2026.

08/26 Performance and Risk Monitoring report: Q3 2025/26

The Head of People and Organisational Development presented a report updating Members on progress in delivering the 2025-2028 Business Plan at the end of quarter three of 2025/26, including the management of key corporate and Business Plan risks.

Key points reported included:

- Of the **19 key actions**, **15** were rated green or complete, and **4** were amber (climate change adaptation; carbon reduction and sequestration; sustainable travel and transport; and vibrant communities and prosperous economy).
- Of the **21 additional key actions**, **17** were green and **4** were amber, with three amber ratings attributable to staff vacancies in specialist posts (asset and property management; sustainability; facilities and buildings management). The planning casework action also remained amber.

- **Service performance** showed no change from Q2, with five of six services rated green; development management remained amber.
- **15 corporate and business plan risks** were reported. None were at critical or high level; six were medium. Noted medium level risks included resource availability, external factors affecting the Authority, development management - enforcement, SAC planning reviews, Brockhole, cyber risk and data security, and World Heritage inscription. All other risks were within tolerance and rated green.

Generic and aggregated risks

A Member questioned the value of several broadly worded risks—such as risks relating to staff engagement, recruitment challenges, events beyond the Authority’s control, and reputational damage—commenting that they offered limited insight into the Authority’s management response. The Member queried whether they were helpful at Committee level.

In response, Members discussed the purpose of the corporate risk register. It was noted that:

- Committee level risks inevitably aggregate several more detailed service level risks.
- The register provides assurance that Officers are actively managing risks and enables Members to challenge whether significant issues are being missed or underestimated.
- The CEO noted that service level registers contain greater operational detail, and it would not be proportionate or practical to bring these forward given Members’ desire to reduce report length.

Members agreed that while high level risks can appear broad, their purpose is to help Members focus on whether the Authority is alive to emerging issues and whether risk severity is appropriately assessed.

Recruitment and outcomes from new posts

A Member raised questions regarding recently advertised posts and what outcomes, or additional value, these roles were expected to deliver.

The CEO explained that:

- Most recent recruitment had replaced staff who had left rather than expanding teams.
- The SVMG Communications post is intended to support high impact visitor messaging, coordinated communications across partners, and continuation of successful influencer-based campaigns initiated at Members' request.
- Partner organisations had already indicated willingness to contribute financially towards the post.

Members noted the connection between recruitment and the mitigation of amber rated risks, and suggested that where recruitment addresses a specific risk, this should be more clearly reflected in the risk register.

Vibrant Communities and a Prosperous Community

A Member queried why Action 9 in the 2025-2028 Business Plan (Annex 2), concerning Vibrant Communities and a Prosperous Economy—including the Windermere Gateway and achievement of affordable housing targets—remained rated amber.

The Head of People and Organisational Development confirmed that the draft presented to Members had been prepared several weeks earlier, prior to the most recent announcement regarding the site. It was explained that while Windermere Gateway remained an allocated site and continued to be a strategic priority, the timescales for delivery had changed, which would influence the rating.

It was noted that the action could justifiably be Red in relation to missing housing targets within the current plan period, but not in terms of long-term development aspirations. It was agreed that the accompanying commentary could be strengthened to better reflect this distinction.

Members discussed their role in risk assurance, emphasising the importance of Members using their external perspective to identify overlooked or underestimated risks.

Decided:

- a Members reviewed progress in delivering the 2025-2028 Business Plan as summarised in Annex 1 and detailed in Annexes 2, 3 and 4; and
- b Members reviewed the management of corporate risks and Business Plan risks as summarised in Annex 1 and detailed in Annex 5.

09/26 Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 – 2030/31

The Head of Resources presented the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2026/27 to 2030/31 for Member consideration.

The Head of Resources outlined the statutory requirement to set a balanced annual budget and the need to demonstrate long-term financial sustainability through the five-year MTFS. Although reserves may be used to balance individual years, this has to be sustainable, with agreed targets of £1.5m for the General Reserve and £0.5m for the Trading Reserve maintained by Year 5. Key financial assumptions include a flat-cash core grant based on the reduced 2025/26 allocation, three years of capital grant funding (subject to Defra confirmation), and updated projections for pay awards. A significant improvement since November relates to the pension fund valuation, which has resulted in reduced employer contributions and a substantial three-year rebate, although this creates a financial ‘cliff edge’ once the rebate and capital-to-revenue flexibilities fall away after Year 3.

Members were advised that much of the report covers capital strategy requirements under the CIPFA Prudential Code, reflecting the Authority’s responsibilities as a local authority organisation, even though it remains effectively debt-free. A second round of capital bidding will be undertaken once grant funding is confirmed, recognising the need to balance Defra priorities with actions that support long-term revenue sustainability. The position remains draft pending the 2026/27 settlement, which is hoped for ahead of the Authority meeting.

Members welcomed the improved financial position compared with recent years, noting that the Authority was able to set a realistic and balanced MTFS without relying heavily on reserves or making overly optimistic assumptions. While this was

seen as a positive development—particularly given the pressures faced across the wider public sector—Members questioned whether the strategy was ambitious enough and encouraged Officers to ensure that the organisation continues to pursue value for money and avoid complacency.

Members also emphasised the importance of understanding where resources are being deployed and whether budget allocations appropriately reflect strategic priorities, including climate adaptation, transport, and the forthcoming Partnership Plan. Suggestions were made for improved visibility of resource shifts, as well as closer alignment between performance reporting, outputs, and expenditure.

The Head of Resources and CEO acknowledged these points, explaining the structural challenges of mapping financial data directly to business plan actions due to the configuration of the finance system, but agreed to explore ways to present the strategic changes in resource allocation.

Members also discussed the balance between maintaining adequate reserves and deploying time-limited funding to support priority work, noting that some reserves—such as the trading reserve—could potentially be reduced if commercial risks continue to stabilise.

Further debate covered organisational capacity at senior level, the need for boldness on complex or politically sensitive issues such as transport and visitor levies, the value of stretching targets, and the importance of understanding the outputs achieved for the funding invested. Members concluded with specific technical queries on capital classification and requested that future proposals for new posts be accompanied by brief explanations of their intended benefits.

Decided:

- a Members commented on the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy set out in Annex 1

10/26 Q3 Finance report

The Head of Resources presented a report updating Members on revenue and capital budget performance for Period 9 (to December) 2025/26. It was explained that overall, the position in year was favourable compared to the original budget.

Members sought clarification on the potential year-end position, noting that, with only a few weeks remaining, there still appeared to be possible upside (particularly around staff time that could legitimately be charged to grants). The Head of Resources confirmed that, as in previous years, final allocations would depend on detailed year-end analysis, with the likelihood that some services would request to ring-fence underspends to extend fixed-term posts or complete delayed work.

Members also explored the scope for further capital investment, if the Authority was to receive another £1.5m capital allocation next year with similar conditions. They encouraged thinking ahead about income-generating assets—especially car parks and solar infrastructure—while acknowledging the constraints of one-year funding and the need to align with Defra requirements, including nature recovery and 30 by 30 priorities.

Further discussion focused on strategic use of capital, the importance of a forward pipeline of invest-to-save and income-producing schemes, and the potential for more sophisticated treasury management where long-term cash balances allow.

Members also raised the issue of legacies, asking whether more could be done to attract bequests. Officers explained the legal and tax constraints that mean most legacy activity is routed through charitable partners such as the Lake District Foundation or the National Parks Foundation.

Finally, Members emphasised that capital funding should also be deployed proactively to deliver core statutory and environmental objectives, not solely income generation. The CEO welcomed the opportunity to do so.

Decided:

- a Resources Committee noted the report

The Committee passed the following resolution:

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items. This was because exempt information, as defined in Schedule 12A of the Act, may be disclosed during discussions.

The meeting was adjourned for an eight-minute break at 11:50 and reconvened at 11:58.

Part 2**11/25 Car parking price increases 2026/27**

The Head of Resources presented a paper setting out proposals for increases to car parking charges at 5 car parks, for Member consideration. These would be applied after 26 March 2026.

The Chair reminded Members that although Officers had delegated authority to make the decision, they were being consulted as it was an item of public interest.

Members were supportive of the planned changes to car parking costs viewing them as favourable in the light of comparative charges of private companies, Local Authorities, and the Forestry Commission.

Decided:

- a Resources Committee considered the report and proposed increases at Annex 1.

(The meeting concluded at 12:13)