Lake District National Park Authority

MINUTES of a meeting of the Lake District National Park Authority held at the National Park Office, Murley Moss, Kendal at 10.00 am on 22 March 2017.

Present
Mr M S McKinley (Chairman)  
Mr J P Allen MBE  
Mr H Branney  
Mr A Clark  
Mr N Clarkson  
Mr N Cumberlidge  
Dr S J Curl
Dr G L Davies  
Mr J M Farmer  
Mrs B C Gray  
Mr M MacInnes  
Mrs V J C Rees  
2 vacancies

Apologies
Dr A J Barker  
Mr J Bland  
Mr W Jefferson OBE
Mr T J Knowles  
Mr J G Thompson

Unable to be present
Mr D Fletcher

18/17   Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Barker, Mr Bland, Mr Jefferson and Mr Thompson.

An apology from Mr Knowles was unannounced at the meeting, however the Member Services Co-ordinator was made aware of his apologies during the recess.

19/17   Minutes

Decided: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

20/17   Chairman’s Announcements

The Chairman informed Members that the feedback from the recent Staff Conference was positive and all found the event worthwhile. He gave thanks to those Members who had also attended.
The Chairman advised Members that he hoped membership of the Authority would be at full strength by the end of June 2017 with the Secretary of State appointment process currently underway together with a further election for a Parish Council member to represent the South Distinctive Area. The latter had now been opened up to include the Central and South East Distinctive Area due to being unsuccessful in nominating a representative from purely the South Distinctive Area.

The Chairman announced that, after 10 years, it was Mr Clarkson’s last Authority meeting. The Chairman thanked him for his contribution during those years. Mr Clarkson was presented with a small token of appreciation from Members and staff.

The Chairman announced to Members and members of the public that a digital sound recording of the meeting would be made.

21/17 Declarations of Interest

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

22/17 Questions

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

23/17 Public Participation

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

24/17 Chief Executive’s Update

In addition to the content of the report, the Chief Executive updated Members on –

- active discussions with United Utilities with regards the Authority becoming hosting body for the legacy fund and the possibility of using urgency powers to take on the fund which would be over delegated limits. Should this happen, it would be reported back to the Authority at the earliest opportunity. The Chief Executive acknowledged the importance of communities both inside and outside the National Park receiving gain from the legacy fund; and

- officers’ determination to pursue alternative arrangements to continue with the apprenticeship programme within the Park Management Service.

Decided: Members noted the update on key topics since the last meeting.

25/17 National Parks England

With regards the Secretary of State appointments, Members noted and welcomed the reinstatement of National Park Authority Chairs to the selection panel considering applications within their National Park.
Decided: The draft minutes of the National Parks England meeting held on 7 February 2017 were received and noted.

26/17 Minutes of Committees

The Minutes of the meetings of the following Committees were laid separately before the meeting and in respect of each Committee it was agreed that the Minutes should be approved and recommendations relating to the functions not delegated to a Committee should be confirmed.

a) Resources Committee

Mr Farmer presented the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2016; and

b) Development Control Committee

Mr Allen presented the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2017.

27/17 Members Representation on Outside Bodies and Partnerships

Verbal updates were given from Members on meetings attended as the Authority’s representative:

Mr Farmer gave an update on –

- recent presentations given at Local Area Partnership meetings;
- discussions at the Parish Forum organised by Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) with the main point of concerns expressed by the Parishes being that of second homes;
- attendance at the Business Task Force, the main content of the meeting covering the increase in insurance premiums to businesses following Storm Desmond. The potential effect on the Lake District should such an event happen in the future was acknowledged and the need for Government intervention to assist businesses raised;
- a meeting with South Lakeland District Council relating to the Lake Windermere Plan proposals which would be going out to public consultation prior to its approval being sought by both our Park Strategy and Vision Committee and South Lakeland District Council; and
- the excellent staff day at Brockhole, commending all those involved in the organisation of the event.

Dr Curl gave an update on –

- progression of the agreement between Columbia Sportswear to provide clothing to rangers and staff at all of the National Parks; and
- launch of the Lake District £ and the hope of raising £420,000 investment to support the venture by virtue of the purchase of shares in the Company. Members were given the benefit of a full explanation as to how the venture would work and were advised that the Post Office had agreed to provide the banking service.
28/17  **Draft 2017-20 Business Plan**

The Chief Executive introduced the report which outlined the draft 2017-20 Business Plan. The Head of Resources advised briefly of the changes in the Business Plan.

Members raised points in relation to the need to –

- intensify discussions with the National Trust to make progress with the Wasdale Head visitor management project. The Director of Sustainable Development acknowledged Members’ frustrations and, with the temporary planning permission for the retention of the temporary conveniences granted, he advised this was becoming a topical conversation with the National Trust’s Assistant Director (North West);

- plead a case for foreign workers who contribute and sustain businesses in the Lake District post Brexit;

- refresh the wording of the Authority’s values. The Director of Communications and Resources advised that, as part of the ongoing organisational development work, a new set of values was to be brought to Authority for adoption in the near future;

- ensure pressure is maintained on partners to improve broadband infrastructure throughout the Lake District. The Chief Executive advised that whilst our own Business Plan remained silent on it, it featured prominently in the Partnership Plan. A representative from Connecting Cumbria had attended the recent meeting of the Lake District National Park Partnership and powerful discussions held to progress with the next phase of broadband rollout. An upturn in planning applications for mobile infrastructure masts was expected, with a potential for improved broadband services as well. As planning authority, he proposed this be reflected in our Business Plan due to the important role played by the Development Management team;

- recognise the importance of some indicators on which the Authority has no direct responsibility and as such, report and monitor these within the Partnership Plan as opposed to our own Business Plan;

- deliver more affordable housing which appeared to be falling short of targets. The Director of Sustainable Development advised of the Government’s recent allocation of funds to the relevant local housing authorities and our part in influencing them to ensure communities within the National Park benefited; and

- engagement with local schools in order for them to gain an understanding and be supportive of World Heritage Site inscription.

**Decided:** a  Members approved the draft 2017-20 Business Plan as presented in Annex 1, subject to any amendments arising from today’s meeting and resource considerations during the service planning process; and
b Members delegated authority to the Chief Executive to make any alterations to the draft Business Plan as agreed at the meeting today or arising from resource considerations during the service planning process.

29/17 Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Director of Communications and Resources presented the report outlining the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2017/18 to 2020/21. For the benefit of Members, she highlighted key points within the report. She also took the opportunity to thank both the Financial Services Manager and Financial Project Account for their help in the document production and acknowledged the significant contribution made by the Resources Committee to the final strategy.

The Chairman of the Resources Committee emphasised the continued importance of the Investing for our Future (IFOF) programme and the need to keep pressure on to generate additional income.

Whilst acknowledging the work and rigor of the Finance Team in presenting the information within the report, the Resources Committee’s Deputy Chairman advised of his challenge of Members’ understanding of the presentation format at the recent Resources Committee and of the need for further clarification on expenditure in relation to our aspirations for flood recovery works, re-development at Brockhole and the wider Partnership Plan funding which was not documented within the report. In response, the Director of Communications and Resources agreed to furthering discussions with both the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Resources Committee in order to improve presentation of the information. She also explained that clarification was still required by both Executive Board and Members on our future priorities, especially funding gaps.

In answer to a question raised, the Director of Communications and Resources confirmed there would be an increase in the planning application fees which was to be ring-fenced for improvements within the planning service.

Decided: a Members approved the Medium Term Financial Strategy contained in Annex 1.

30/17 Revenue and Capital Budgets – 2017/18

The Director of Communications and Resources presented the report detailing proposals for the Authority’s revenue and capital budgets for 2017/18 and headline revenue budgets for 2018/19 to 2020/21. In addition to revenue and capital budgets, the Authority must also approve a treasury management strategy and prudential indicators before the start of each financial year.

Decided: a Members approved the revenue budget and capital programme for 2017/18 in Annexes 1 to 5 of the report;

b Members approved the movements in and use of revenue reserves as set out in Annex 1 Table 2;

c Members approved the indicative revenue budgets for 2018/19 to 2020/21 set out in Annex 1 Table 3;
Members approved the Treasury Management Strategy for 2017/18 as set out in Annex 6;

Members approved the Prudential Indicators for 2017/18 as set out in Annex 7; and

Members authorised the Section 151 Officer to make any consequential adjustments to the draft budgets in the light of the decisions at (a) to (e).

The meeting was adjourned and reconvened after a 10 minute break.

31/17 Lakes Alive Festival – Authority Acts as Accountable Body

The Director of Communications and Resources presented the report which sought approval for the Authority to continue to be the accountable body for the Lakes Alive festival, supported by the Arts Council England (ACE).

Members welcomed the initiative and were eager to develop the programme by exploring joint working opportunities with partner organisations and encouraged having a much more extensive reach throughout the whole of the National Park, especially in rural areas. The Director of Communications and Resources explained that through Lakes Alive it was hoped to breakdown some of the barriers of people’s perception of arts and culture, reaching out to new audiences and with an emphasis on participation.

Decided: a Members agreed to the Authority being the accountable body for Lakes Alive from 2017-2022.

32/17 Our Work With Farming

The Director of Sustainable Development presented the report which reviewed and refreshed our work on farming issues and with farmers. The report set out our current view, role and a draft action plan for which endorsement by the Authority was sought. He wished to thank the Head of Strategy and Partnerships and Lead Strategy Adviser – Natural Environment and Land Management for the incredible amount of work they are doing to support this.

With the recruitment of a Farming Officer post currently underway, it was hoped that the person recruited to the post would have great interpersonal skills who could build trust and a relationship with farmers in the National Park, being an ambassador not only for the Authority but vice-versa.

Members were supportive of the proposal, but at the same time asked officers to be cautious in the appointment process to ensure that the person’s remit was broader than just a background in farming and agriculture. An ability to support and advise farmers to become not only farmers but entrepreneurs was required as diversification was a key element going forward. The importance of strengthening our relationship with the Country Land and Business Association was acknowledged.

Decided: a Members endorsed our current view on farming in the National Park, our role and the draft action plan, as set out in Annex 1.
(The meeting finished at 12.10 pm)