

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

6 December 2019

NATIONAL PARKS UKReport of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer)Recommendation: **That Members agree that:**

- (i) **National Parks UK should be wound up voluntarily;**
- (ii) **note that Lucinda Clare Coleman and Stephen James Hobson of Francis Clark LLP Centenary House, Peninsula Park, Rydon Lane, Exeter EX2 7XE be appointed as Joint Liquidators of the Company for the purposes of the voluntary winding-up and that their fixed fee will be paid from National Parks UK reserves prior to the closing balance being divided evenly between the 15 UK NPAs; and**
- (iii) **authorise the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), in consultation with the Chair, to act on behalf of the Authority in this matter.**

1 Background

- 1.1 National Parks UK is a limited company registered with Companies House (09454101). It evolved out of the Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA) which was the umbrella organisation that represented National Park Authorities (NPAs) across the UK. Devolution meant that ANPA lost its policy role as National Park policy is a devolved matter. The English NPAs established the English National Park Authorities Association (ENPAA) – now National Parks England – and the Welsh established National Parks Wales. ANPA remained as an umbrella organisation focused on:
 - promoting the National Park message/brand;
 - providing banking facilities for the National Parks portal (a shared IT/web hosting/support service across all 15 NPAs); and
 - providing member training (though it should be noted that the bi-annual UK National Parks conference is organised by the host NPA).
- 1.2 ANPA (and then National Parks UK) had its own offices and employed its own staff. National Parks UK no longer occupies or owns any office space and has no employees.
- 1.3 When Reckitt Benckiser offered to sponsor the UK National Parks as part of its promotion of its range of Airwick range of air fresheners it was decided that ANPA should become a limited company in order to provide some 'protection' for the Directors and ensure that there was a legal entity able to enter into formal contracts and agreements with third parties.
- 1.4 In February 2018 the Directors of National Parks UK (the Chairs/Conveners of the 15 UK NPAs) agreed to wind-up the company and pursue a model of 'internal commissioning' for services that the National Parks wished to share/collaborate on.
- 1.5 This internal commissioning model is in addition to:

- The professional officer networks that have UK remit/membership. These groups act as a vehicle for knowledge transfer, continuing professional development and, where relevant at a UK level, policy development (e.g. military training which remains a non-devolved matter).
- National Parks Partnerships (NPP) - NPP is a Limited Liability Partnership established by all 15 UK NPAs to further the commercial sponsorship agenda. NPP was established to pursue commercial sponsorship as NPUK had proven ineffective in that it was cumbersome (getting agreement from 15 Chairs/Conveners and 15 Chief Executives (National Park Officers) was not quick; the business model upon which NPP was predicated suggested that a Limited Liability Partnership was more tax efficient than a limited company; the structure of NPP provided for the engagement of private sector expertise on the Management Board.

1.6 In the last twelve months the UK NPAs have run an internal procurement exercise to award a contract for new member development/induction training. Brecon Beacons NPA was awarded the contract on behalf of the England and Welsh NPAs (the Scottish Parks have a different model for member training). Financial management of the National Parks Portal has been transferred to the Lake District until at least 31 March 2020 and portal finances have been separated out from those of National Parks UK. Further work is being undertaken to identify a future operating model for shared IT/web services.

1.7 In addition, a new Branding and Marketing Unit has been established (following an internal procurement exercise) with all 15 NPAs and NPP as funding partners. The Unit is hosted by the Broads Authority and underpinned by a three year service level agreement (SLA). The SLA states that the Three Year Strategy and Action Plan will be approved by the Chairs/Conveners of the NPAs and the Board of NPP. The draft strategy is attached at Appendix 1 for information.

1.8 In agreeing to wind-up NPUK, the Chairs and Conveners also agreed to establish a UK Forum which would meet at least once a year. The agreed terms of reference for the Forum are attached at Appendix 2. The Forum has no policy role but acts as a discussion forum for share learning and to discuss key strategic issues.

1.9 Members might wish to note that the next meeting of the Forum will be hosted by Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. The intention is to link it to the UN Climate Change Conference that is taking place in Glasgow (COP 26). The reason being to raise awareness of the work we are collectively doing on climate change. When declaring a Climate and Ecological Emergency the Authority was asked to use its influence to raise climate change as an issue with other NPAs.

2 Winding-up National Parks UK

2.1 Francis Clark LLP have been appointed to undertake a Members' Voluntary Liquidation of National Parks UK. Following feedback from Chairs/Conveners they have agreed to do this for a fixed fee of £5,000 plus disbursements and VAT, subject to the process taking no more than 12 months. The costs will be taken from National Parks UK reserves before the remaining balance is divided evenly amongst the 15 UK NPAs.

2.2 On 27 November 2019 the Directors of NPUK reaffirmed the reasons why it was considered appropriate to place the company into liquidation (in summary, no further requirement for the company based on a more efficient and effective way of

operating across the 15 UK NPAs), reviewed the declaration of solvency, approved it and swore it in front of a registered solicitor.

- 2.3 The next step in the liquidation process is for the Members of the company (the individual NPAs) to agree the Members' Voluntary Liquidation. As soon as 75% of the membership agree the liquidation and the necessary forms have been signed and returned to Francis Clark, then the company is in liquidation. On that date the Chair of the Company will sign and date the resolution that the company has gone into liquidation and sign and date the certificate of Joint Liquidators' appointment.
- 2.4 Once in liquidation the National Parks UK bank account will transfer to Francis Clark. They will carry out due diligence and submit final statement of account, deduct their agreed fee and divide the remaining balance evenly between the 15 Members (i.e. the NPAs).

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The costs of the liquidation process will be met from the National Parks UK reserves. It is anticipated that once the liquidation process is complete that there will be less than £15,000 in the National Parks UK account and thus we will receive less than a £1,000 upon liquidation.
- 3.2 The new internal commissioning model will cost less per annum than National Parks UK subscription.

4 Conclusion and Recommendation

- 4.1 The new internal commissioning model provides a framework for shared service delivery between the 15 UK NPAs that is more cost effective and efficient than the limited company model that operated under National Parks UK. The new model provides for active performance management.
- 4.2 It is recommended that the Authority agrees that:
- National Parks UK should be wound up voluntarily;
 - note that Lucinda Clare Coleman and Stephen James Hobson of Francis Clark LLP be appointed as Joint Liquidators of the Company for the purposes of the voluntary winding-up and that their fixed fee will be paid from National Parks UK reserves prior to the closing balance being divided evenly between the 15 UK NPAs.
 - authorise the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), in consultation with the Chair, to act on behalf of the Authority in this matter.

KEVIN BISHOP

Attachments: Appendix 1 – UK National Parks Marketing and Communications Strategy 2019-2022 and 2020 Action Plan
Appendix 2 – Terms of Reference for the UK National Parks Chairs and Conveners Forum

◀ National Parks

***Marketing and
Communications
Strategy 2019-2022 &
2020 Action Plan***

Draft 03 @ 18 November 2019

01 ***Executive summary***

Executive summary

- The strategy and messages in this document directly build on and support the brand (our *Shared story*) developed with The Way Design and signed off by all Chairs and CEOs in 2019
- Heads of Communications have been fully involved in the development of this strategy at every stage including a workshop held early in development in September 2019
- This document is informed by telephone interviews with all 15 CEOs of the National Parks. The dominant emerging theme was a collective desire to have a stronger voice in the debate about how to avert climate crisis and enhance biodiversity
- The strategy is about inspiring to care: care being an action, not simply an emotion
- The actions we aim to prompt do not necessarily involve people visiting a National Park. That being said, the profile we develop will strongly support and reinforce the efforts of those National Parks whose own messages focus on attracting people to visit them or experience them through intellectual access
- The approach is focused on creating things that are relevant to audiences in order to promote what we do, not talking about what we are doing and trying to make that relevant
- This strategy is agile and iterative, based on learning over time – a virtuous cycle of do – assess – review – do
- Research and robust data about our wider audiences is sparse. In order to support our agile virtuous circle, we will need to build these research and data gathering elements into activities to support our learning and increase efficacy over time
- The strategy is designed to build common value in a central repository – our brand. It is not necessary or desirable to precisely, equally apportion messages and activities across all fifteen National Parks for all fifteen National Parks to benefit from this shared brand equity. Counting who got how many tweets about their park isn't related to the efficacy of building a nationally relevant brand.

02 *Introduction*

Introduction and background

This document introduces the intended strategy to guide the marketing and communications activities of the new UK National Parks central unit over the next three years. It will be reviewed and updated annually over that time. It introduces a year-one activity schedule. This too is iterative and will be augmented and updated monthly in discussion with the UK National Parks Communications Steering Group and every six months with the wider Heads of Communications community.

The desire and need to establish a shared voice for all fifteen National Parks is multifaceted but can be summarised with one statistic. During the UK National Parks Public Awareness Survey (August 2018) a sample representative of the UK population was asked to name three countryside conservation organisations. Only three people in every 100 mentioned National Parks. This is despite the fact that 36% of the same sample had visited a National Park within the previous three years.

This strategy is about improving on 3 in 100.

This is important for three reasons:

- The ability to fulfil National Parks' statutory purposes will be enhanced by a collective leadership voice on relevant topics
- The public should feel National Parks are relevant and National Parks Authorities are important publicly funded bodies
- The ability to influence the attitudes and behaviour of the widest possible audience will help National Parks to have the biggest possible positive effect on the issues closest to our collective heart.

How this strategy has been developed

The strategy and messages in this document directly build on and support the brand (our *Shared story*) developed with The Way Design and signed off by all Chairs and CEOs in 2019.

The Heads of Communications of individual National Parks and the National Parks Partnerships team have had sight of and considerable input to this document throughout every stage of its development. It is based on telephone interviews with all 15 CEOs of National Parks (carried out in September and October 2019) and qualitative research amongst the wider National Parks communications departments and community (carried out in September 2019).

This document has been considered and further developed by CEOs at an all-day workshop meeting on 7 November 2019 and further reviewed and accepted by the National Parks England CEO meeting on 14 November 2019. It is currently being considered by the National Parks Partnerships board and is to be presented to Chairs on 27 November 2019.

In the meantime, the central unit has been progressing activities highlighted in the workplan up to April / May as well as supporting this process.

03 *Positioning and themes*

One story, three themes

This strategy is about speaking with one voice on behalf of fifteen different organisations; separate entities that have no overarching executive. The imperative must be to simplify as much as possible - but not too much - the complex nature and governance of this family and its unique members. The aim: to deliver a clear, compelling message about National Parks' worth and importance to the UK and its nations.

Each National Park has interesting and important things to say. And yet having a central unit that simply acts as a firehouse for this information is not of much value. Each National Park is the expert on itself and telling its own story to its own important audiences. Replicating that is pointless. The aim of this strategy, and the central unit, must be to take the perspective of the outsider to this family. To tell one story that is interesting and relevant to the full spectrum of important audiences. Then, to use that story to amplify the work of the individual National Parks beyond their existing constituencies.

From our *Shared story* (joint brand) the purpose of National Parks is:

To inspire everyone to care (...more)

Our call to action, then, is for audiences to care more about the environment in general and our special landscapes in particular...but not just to *feel* more care, to care enough to *do something* that will make a positive difference.

The interviews with the 15 Chief Executives to inform this strategy had one predominant emerging theme: the clear desire to have **a stronger voice in the debate about how to avert climate crisis and enhance biodiversity**. More specifically, to show leadership in advocating and demonstrating how individuals and organisations *need to change*. To change the way that they value and relate to the natural environment.

National Parks have the responsibility to deliver, day-to-day in living environments with a plethora of competing interest: to do all that with no authority or legislative powers apart from planning. And yet it is in facing just these challenges that we might establish our own leadership niche in the most important debate of the age. We don't just say, we do. We provide leadership within our landscapes by making vital connections. We broker and nurture positive collaboration between important agents in a way that delivers actual physical change; change that enhances biodiversity and addresses climate change. It is this experience of delivering real change in real life upon which we can establish an authoritative, leadership platform; nationally and internationally. We help people make the move from talking about the problem to becoming an active part of the solution.

We have a leadership niche.

We have the vocabulary – our new *Shared story*

We have the evidence – the work we do in our National Parks¹

This can be summarised in the following simple positioning statement:

We inspire people to care...more

We help people make the move from talking about a problem to becoming an active part of the solution.

We provide landscape leadership, making vital connections to:

- **Enhance the environment**
- **Improve mental and physical wellbeing**
- **Support more resilient societies**

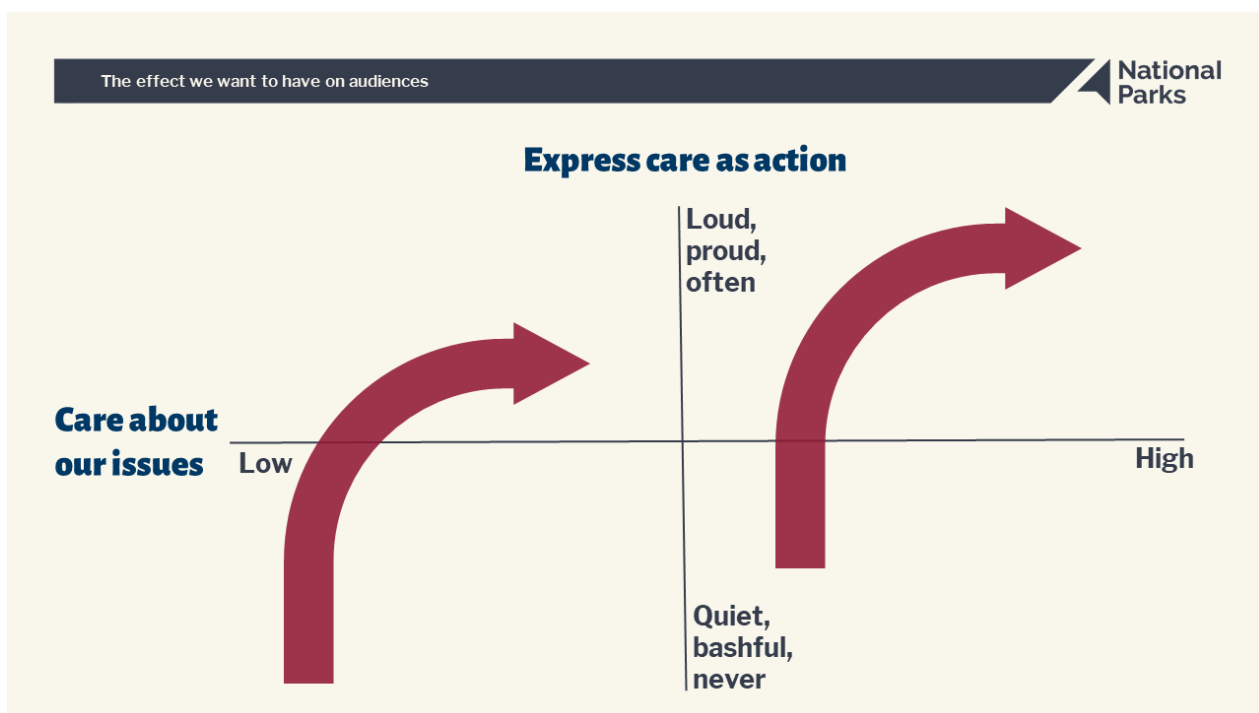
¹ The CEOs and Heads of Communications identified three headings under which the work National Parks do can be grouped for the purposes of this strategy: Enhancing the environment; Improving mental and physical wellbeing; Supporting more resilient societies.

04 *Audiences*

Segmenting by care

The effect we wish to have is to inspire people to care. We want to activate them: to get them to experience - and value - caring by doing something. How can we use this thinking to segment audiences in a way that allows us to target them effectively via appropriate channels with the right messages? Can this thinking be linked to how we measure the effect of our activity?

If we map caring about nature and the environment against expressing that care as action the effect we wish to have on audiences can be shown like this:



Roughly speaking, audiences to the right of the Y axis can be seen as the **National Parks Tribe** (NP Tribe). If prompted they might say the National Parks (or a National Park) are relevant to them and valued by them. They will have visited a park at some point in their life and would express an affinity with the purpose and aims of National Parks. Those to the left of the Y axis, **Everyone Else**, may not have visited a National Park, perhaps no one in their family has. They don't get out and about much; either to pursue an activity or just for the sake of it. They might feel it's just 'not for them' – either because they don't value the experience or because they feel in some way excluded by dint of their socio-economic circumstances or other access issues.

This way of segmenting audiences is necessarily broad brush, for two reasons:

1. We need to keep our communications relevant to as wide an audience as possible
2. We do not have the relevant specific data (nor the budget to commission research) that might allow us to drill down.

The aim of the strategy is to learn through doing.

By carrying out activities and campaigns targeted at having the effect on specific audiences within our segments, we'll learn more about each of these audiences and can start building some detail into our picture.

The tables below (*Message Maps*) express the effect illustrated in the graph above in a way that can guide or decision making about the messages we wish to communicate. Each activity we do will teach us how to communicate those messages more effectively to achieve the desired objectives.

Enhance the environment

Audience Segment: NP Tribe				
Objective:	Current perception:	Desired Perception:	Message:	Channels:
To get the audience to engage other people to volunteer or join in with an activity	"I do my bit but it feels like a drop in the ocean; even people like me need to step up more."	"I can amplify my effort. National Parks show how."	You can care most by getting others to join in	Website Newsletter Parks & Staff Media relations Social Media

Audience Segment: Everyone Else				
Objective:	Current perception:	Desired Perception:	Message:	Channels:
To get the audience to do something new to connect with nature.	"I'm not that bothered about nature. Not my thing?"	"That's interesting, I'll give it a go."	Here's simple examples of interesting things that anyone can do anywhere.	Website Social media Media relations

Improve mental and physical wellbeing

Audience Segment: NP Tribe				
Objective:	Current perception:	Desired Perception:	Message:	Channels:
To get the audience to support activities that parks or other partners organise	“Getting out and about feels great mentally and physically – I don’t know why everyone doesn’t do it.”	“I understand the barriers that stop everyone benefitting the way I do – I’ll help people overcome them.”	Feel great by getting out and about, feel even better by helping others	Website Newsletter Parks & Staff Media relations Social media

Audience Segment: Everyone Else				
Objective:	Current perception:	Desired Perception:	Message:	Channels:
To get audiences to try a new activity outdoors.	“People like me don’t do outdoorsy stuff.”	“There’s loads of simple things I could do to improve my mood and health.”	Everyone who does this feels better. Here’s simple examples that anyone can do anywhere.	Website Media relations Social media

Support more resilient societies

Audience Segment: NP Tribe				
Objective:	Current perception:	Desired Perception:	Message:	Channels:
To establish a social obligation by raising awareness of the social significance of National Parks work.	“Stuff I associate with Parks is all about me or my specific tribe (birdwatchers, family campers, mountain bikers etc.)”	“UK National Parks is my go-to-place for things I can encourage people like me to do in order to address climate change and support nature recovery.”	UK National Parks is a source of reliable information on practical things we can all do to protect and enhance the environment as individuals and communities	Website Media relations Networks and associations Good practice tools and activities

Audience Segment: Everyone Else				
Objective:	Current perception:	Desired Perception:	Message:	Channels:
To establish connections between disparate social groups and communities by acting to join the NP Tribe	“National Parks? Don’t know what they are. Don’t do anything for me.”	“National Parks help pull society together to actually do practical stuff to address climate change and save nature.”	Here are the 5 things we can all do that will help address climate change and strengthen our connection with nature – and each other	Social media NPP campaigns

05 *Campaigns and activity*

Campaigns and activity

A word about our language

UK National Parks represents 15 different National Parks that, crucially, work in three countries under devolved governments, as well as National Parks Partnerships. Although we will speak with one voice, we will also recognise in our messaging the responsibility to individual governments and the populations they represent. This includes, but is not limited to, supporting the Welsh National Parks to deliver communications bilingually.

Central campaign

We need to focus our activities. Although the six *Message Maps* show the effect we wish to have under our three themes, all of our activity needs tell one story. One of the first tasks under this strategy will be to create options for, test and choose a central campaign.

From the UK National Parks *Shared story*, the personal benefit we offer is to:

Feel great by connecting with nature.

Our campaign will be focused on getting people actually to act: either to express their caring as action; or to take an action and, through doing that, experience how great it feels to care.

We will give people simple things to do that will help enhance nature. We will present these as a spectrum: not everyone wants to go vegan and give up air travel but there are steps they can make – sourcing local meat, favouring rail over car - that will have a positive impact. This reflects the aim to move our audiences towards the top right quadrant where they are mapped in Section 3; to get them to start a journey in the right direction with the simplest steps, closest to home.

We will group these things-to-do under a few headings (no more than half a dozen) each of the headings related to one or more of our three themes but all focused on our core campaign:

Possible headings for things to do

- Eating and drinking
- Out and about in nature
- Volunteering and getting stuck in
- The generation of the future (education)
- Helping others to join in

We are a ‘trusted broker’ for people looking to do something positive. This reflects the role individual National Parks play; providing a leading voice within our landscapes but actually delivering through collaborative effort with other bodies and local communities.

The website's purpose in delivering our value proposition

The nationalparks.uk website's role is specific and pivotal (literally). It is where people come to find out about stuff: what to do, where to go. But the site's role is not necessarily to have a plethora of pages that answer everyone's specific questions. Instead it acts as a hub to link efficiently to the best (that often means *most local*) places for answers, suggestions and resources. This key functionality was identified through the website research project and during user journey mapping by Heads of Communications.

Backbeat activity

The UK National Parks unit will provide a number of core, central services on behalf of all National Parks including:

- Producing, publishing and promoting a quarterly /seasonal e-newsletter
- A central press office function: handling enquiries via nationalparks.uk and referring them to the appropriate National Parks Authorities, National Parks England (NPE) and other relevant country specific Policy commentators
- Supporting the host National Park with the agenda and content for twice yearly Heads of Communications meeting
- Managing the support and relationship with National Parks Partnerships on behalf of all National Parks
- Supporting the management and administration of the MABeL image database

2020 Activity Calendar

Over the page is a calendar showing the planned activity for the UK National Parks central unit in the coming year. This activity will be reviewed monthly with the Communications Steering Group and more widely amongst Heads of Communications at meetings in March and November.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Campaigns	Discover National Parks prep.												
					Plan and launch central campaign - phase 1								
										Plan central campaign - phase 2			
		Dark skies / anti sheep worrying	28 Earth hour: promo opp.	22 Earth Day 50 th Anniversary					#weewalkweek	Dark Skies			
	Photo competition with CNP				1 yr. Educ. Grants Work - FH				OS Get Outside		Volunteer Awards		Plan photo comp with CNP
Backbeat regular activities	Spring newsletter Prep. Publish Promote			Summer newsletter Prep. Publish Promote			Autumn newsletter Prep. Publish Promote			Winter Newsletter Prep. Publish			
	Support National Parks Partnerships partner campaigns												
	National Parks press office function and first line fielding of nationalparks.uk enquiries												
	Prep Heads of Comms Meeting		H of C 2-4 Lake District					Prep Heads of Comms Meeting		H of C Pembrokeshire			
Special projects	nationalparks.uk revamp								Further website dev. Or potential #thinklocaltoactglobal app dev. (depending on project funding)				
	Digital and social media management - systems and management process												
	X-cutting themes media project development												
	Internal comms and staff engagement												

06 *Next steps*

Next steps

Priority next step activities

- Identify key design parameters and goals for nationalparks.uk website
- Identify themes and activities for Discover National Parks Fortnight
- Explore and narrow down options for the themes and activities of the central campaign
- Develop the editorial and production strategy and process of the e-newsletter
- Flesh out Message Maps and identify timeframes and appropriate measures for the objectives to make them SMART

Terms of Reference for the UK National Parks Chairs and Conveners Forum

Purpose

To provide:

- a discussion forum for Chairs/Conveners of National Park Authorities (NPAs) with the aim of providing a mechanism to share learning and to discuss strategic issues facing the UK National Parks.
- an opportunity for Chairs/Conveners to discuss the three year strategy for the UK Branding and Marketing Unit and associated annual action plan. The process for formal agreement of the strategy is outlined in the service level agreement. The Forum will receive an annual review of the work of the Branding and Marketing Unit for comment.
- a vehicle for discussing collaboration across the UK National Parks and receive feedback on the performance of existing collaborative ventures (for example, the portal, member training and Branding and Marketing Unit).

Membership

The Forum will be open to the Chairs and Conveners of all UK National Parks. If a Chair or Convenor is unable to attend they may send a representative.

The Lead National Park Officer will attend the meeting to note any action points and ensure an effective flow of information between Chairs and Chief Executives.

Where appropriate the Chairs and Conveners may decide to invite others such as NPA Chief Executives to attend Forum meetings.

Organisation

Responsibility for organising the Forum will rest with the Lead National Park Officer who will liaise with the Chair of UK National Parks in determining venue, agenda etc.

Costs will be borne equally between the participating Authorities.

The Forum will meet at least once per annum ('the annual meeting' at which the Chair and Deputy Chair will be elected, their terms of office will start at the close of the annual meeting). The Chair of UK National Parks¹, in consultation with the Lead National Park Officer will determine the necessity and frequency of any other meetings.

The Lead National Park Officer is determined via a rota agreed between the National Park Officers. The 'term of office' lasts for 12 months from 1 January each year.

At the Forum meeting held on 27 November 2019 it was agreed that (i) the Chair of the Forum would rotate between England, Scotland and Wales; and (ii) an election process, if required, was approved.

¹ The term UK National Parks is used to signify the collective of the 15 NPAs in the United Kingdom and should not be confused with National Parks UK (the limited company that was established by the UK National Parks and as of December 2019 is in the process of being dissolved).