

North Yorkshire Council

Corporate Director - Environment

30 May 2024

North Yorkshire National Landscapes (Howardian Hills & Nidderdale): DEFRA Core Funding Acceptance

Report of the Assistant Director – Environmental Services and Climate Change

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To recommend acceptance of the total grant of £2,263,758 from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) which provides core funding for the statutory operation and activities of the two National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty): Howardian Hills and Nidderdale. North Yorkshire Council provide host authority responsibilities.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is land protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act which has been designated for conservation due to its significant landscape value.
- 2.2 In November 2023, AONB areas in England and Wales were rebranded as National Landscapes.
- 2.3 The CROW Act sets out the roles and responsibilities that different organisations must follow to manage AONBs. There are 34 AONBs in England. The designation means that local authorities have: “a permissive power to take action to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONBs in their areas.” Often this is facilitated through a ‘host authority’ responsibility. North Yorkshire Council has host Authority responsibility for two primary national landscapes (formerly AONBs) which are:
- Howardian Hills National Landscape
 - Nidderdale National Landscape
- 2.4 North Yorkshire also includes a small portion of the Forrest of Bowland National Landscape. Lancashire County Council are the host authority for this area.
- 2.5 Under the CROW Act, Natural England can make orders to designate AONBs or vary the boundaries of existing ones. These powers apply to England only. Areas are designated in recognition of their national importance, by this relevant public body and undergo an extensive consultation process in doing so.
- 2.6 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty enjoy levels of protection from development similar to those of UK national parks, but unlike with national parks the responsible bodies do not have their own planning powers.

3.0 NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CORE FUNDING

- 3.1 The two National Landscapes which North Yorkshire Council have primary host authority responsibility for; receives its core operational (revenue/capital) funding from DEFRA.
- 3.2 This is made up of core operational funding which contribute to the day to day running of the National Landscape team, including resourcing and revenue expenditure. In addition to combined revenue/capital grant funding which fund natural capital enhancement programmes such as Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) grants or other conservation grants.
- 3.3 North Yorkshire contribute match funding through its host authority responsibilities in addition to in-kind provision such as back-office support and central administrative functions.
- 3.4 The DEFRA contribution for 2024/2025 is broken down as follows:

| National Landscape | DEFRA Funding Allocation |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 2024/2025 Howardian Hills | £613,411.74 |
| Capital/Revenue Breakdown | £180,627.96 (Revenue) £432,783.78 (Capital) |
| 2024/2025 Nidderdale | £1,650,347 |
| Capital/Revenue Breakdown | £448,318.29 (Revenue) £1,202,029.00 (Capital) |
| North Yorkshire Match Funding | £110,000 |
| Total | £2,373,758 |

- 3.5 This is core funding that forms part of the budget of the National Landscapes funded by DEFRA. It is also a consistent funding stream which is budgeted for annually.

4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Not accepting this grant would mean that DEFRA would not be able to provide the core funding it expects to provide for the two National Landscapes. This external organisation which North Yorkshire Council has host authority responsibilities for but is not directly responsible for running; would not be able to operate and deliver its statutory functions. It would be a reputational risk for North Yorkshire and its relationship with DEFRA.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The council will receive £2.26m in grant funding for 24/25 which acts as the statutory core funding for the two National Landscapes which exist across North Yorkshire. It is broken down into specific funding for grant programmes such as Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) alongside revenue funding for staffing across the two National Landscapes.
- 5.2 North Yorkshire contribute match funding through its host authority responsibilities in addition to in-kind provision such as back-office support and central administrative functions and as confirmed by Finance is indicated to be in the region of £110,000 total across both National Landscapes.
- 5.3 This is to be accepted in accordance with the guidelines of the Grant Determination Letter and the terms and conditions stipulated by DEFRA.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from acceptance of this core grant funding.

7.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATONS

7.1 Accepting this grant will contribute to enhancing and conserving natural capital within the two areas of outstanding natural beauty. Natural Capital is a key theme of the Council's Climate Change Strategy. The National Landscapes through their activities and projects promote natural sequestration and climate adaptation.

8.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Accepting this grant enables core funding to be provided to ensure the statutory functions of the two national landscapes that exist within North Yorkshire.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION

9.1 That the Corporate Director for Environment agree to the acceptance of the 24/25 DEFRA National Landscapes statutory grant totalling £2.26m and inform the Assistant Director Resources under delegation from Corporate Director, Resources (Chief Financial Officer) in accordance with grant acceptance guidance.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

Michael Leah
Assistant Director – Environmental Services and Climate Change
County Hall
Northallerton

Report Author – Shaun Berry, Head of Environment & Sustainability
Report Presented – Shaun Berry, Head of Environment & Sustainability