

North Yorkshire Moors Association Trustees' Report 2021-2022

September 2021-August 2022

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
Registered Charity Number 1169240
Address: c/o Glen Cottage, Carr Lane, Scalby, Scarborough YO13 0SB

President of the Association: Ian Carstairs OBE

Trustees at August 2022

Tom Chadwick
Raymond Clarke
Albert Elliot
Helen Gundry
Adrian Leaman (Interim Chair)
Gerard McElwee
Brian Pearce (Hon. Treasurer)
Thomas Ratcliffe
John Ritchie
Colin Speakman
Andy Wilson
George Winn-Darley (Interim Vice-chair)
Elaine Wisdom

Executive Secretary: Janet Cochrane

During the course of the year, Cal Moore and Dave Moore stood down as Trustees after many years' service. We are very pleased that they remain active within the Association. Ann Glass also stood down, and we are very grateful for her contribution over the time she stood as a Trustee.

The Association's governance is based on the its 2016 Constitution, written when it became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, and amended in 2020.

The 'Council' is the body which manages the Association. In addition to the Trustees, there is one Council member - the Executive Secretary - who is not a Trustee. Council members are nominated and seconded by members and elected annually at the AGM along with the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. Council members may also be co-opted during the year, between AGMs.

The Association has a representative on the Council of the Campaign for National Parks (CNP).

Introduction

As might be expected, disruption from the Covid pandemic affected the routine work of NYMA in 2020-2021, but by October 2021 things had stabilised enough for us to be able to successfully host a 'face-to-face' National Park Societies conference at Cloughton, near Scarborough. This gave us both the focus and impetus to think about NYMA's own priorities in a wider context: our own organisational structure, and our relationships with the North York Moors National Park Authority

(NYMNPA), the other 11 national park societies, the umbrella charity - the Campaign for National Parks - and the Government's evolving policies on national parks and other protected landscapes in the UK. These activities, which resulted in an intense six-month period, are covered in more detail in the following sections. They include:

- A reformed Council with a new governance structure
- Policy review papers for Defra and NYMNPA
- New social media channels
- Changes in membership administration
- Exploring the potential for partnering with like-minded Yorkshire charities in the heritage sector
- Greater efforts to secure new members in businesses and small organisations
- Experiments with evening 'awareness-raising' webinars
- More talks about NYMA to local organisations
- A financial review, given the need to expand our capacity and capabilities
- Recruiting new Council members with expertise in critical areas.

Finance

These ambitions, though, need to be underpinned with sound finances. Although NYMA's finances have been stable in recent years with a good cash reserve, we are aware that new ambitions will require new or expanded sources of finance. A cash flow projection carried out in March 2022 showed that, as a minimum, we need extra funds to support administrative costs. As a result, we are in the process of carrying out a financial review. Areas under review include the potential for more legacies, such as the recent Patmore bequest (see below); partnering more closely with other organisations on joint projects; an expanded membership and the possibility of new or reduced membership categories; grant aid and greater efforts to secure donations; book sales; help and ideas from our existing members; and several more.

Membership

Membership numbers are closely linked to NYMA's financial fortunes, as these are our main source of funds. We currently (August 2022) have 371 members across the following categories: Annual (177), Ten-Year (52) and Life (104) memberships (all of which may be linked to family members or friends as a Joint membership), plus digital options for people who prefer to receive 'Voice of the Moors' in pdf format rather than paper (38). Unfortunately, the 156 members (one-third of the total) who fall into the 10-year and Life member categories are a net cost to NYMA because of rising costs and inflation, so we will be examining whether to discontinue or revise these options for new members. They will remain for existing members.

Activities, Projects and Events in 2021-22

National Parks Societies Conference 2021: 'The Future of National Parks': NYMA hosted this event on 10-12 October 2021, an annual conference bringing together members and officers of the UK National Parks Societies and the CNP. Janet Cochrane organised the event, and is to be

congratulated on her tenacity in overcoming obstacles created by the pandemic. Other contributions from NYMA came from Ian Carstairs and Colin Speakman who acted as session hosts, from Andy Wilson who was one of the speakers and later joined NYMA's Council, and from Adrian Leaman who recorded the sessions and later edited them for NYMA's new YouTube channel. Other speakers were Kate Ashbrook (Open Spaces Society), Debbie Trebilco (North Yorkshire Rural Commission), Tom Hind (North York Moors National Park Authority), Susan Briggs (North Yorkshire Tourism Network), David Steel (Dawnay Estates), David Rooke (Yorkshire and Derwent Catchment Partnership) and Steve Race (Yorkshire Coast Nature). All the talks and Q&A sessions may be found on NYMA's YouTube channel. In addition, a programme of field trips and visits to the coast, moors and North York Moors Railway was hosted by Alan Staniforth, Tammy Naylor, Kerry Fieldhouse, George Thompson and George Winn-Darley, with essential contributions from Dave Moore, Robin Chapman, and Janet Cochrane who drove the minibuses.

Battle of Byland Memorial: Made possible by a generous donation to NYMA by the late Professor Allan Patmore, a former Vice-President of NYMA, a memorial stone (kindly donated by NYMA trustee George Winn-Darley) and an interpretation board are now in place on the Sutton Bank escarpment at Roulston Scar near the National Park Visitor Centre. The stone has a plaque commemorating the battle in this area between the English and Scots in October 1322, ready for a day of commemorative activities in October 2022. The project is a collaboration between NYMA and the National Park Authority and was driven forward by Volunteer Ranger Harry Pearson. It is a marvellous example of how legacy funding contributes to enduring cultural heritage.

Walks: Our programme of monthly walks returned to normal after the pandemic hiatus. Dave Moore has taken over the organisational role from Heather Mather. We thank Heather, and all other walk leaders: Wendy Smith, Cal and Dave Moore, Kath Mair, John and Joan Roberts, Albert Elliot, Janet Cochrane and Robin Chapman for their support and commitment. In addition, we organised a Moors-themed guided walk for a group of British Asian women during the summer of 2022.

Talks and Recruitment: Led by Ray Clarke with contributions from Janet Cochrane, NYMA now has an active talks programme, with presentations (since pandemic restrictions were lifted) to a variety of local groups as well as branches of larger organisations such as the WI, RSPB and Soroptimist International. The events are extremely useful as a way of raising awareness of NYMA and our work, meeting members and recruiting new ones, and generating some funds. We also ran a highly successful Zoom-based talk and Q&A in January 2022 on the responsible retrofitting of traditional buildings, with over 60 participants. We plan to continue with Zoom sessions on winter evenings, with a convivial and relaxed approach, so that we may understand more about and contribute to our members' love of the moors.

Voice of the Moors: 'Voice', now at issue no. 148, is an enduring and highly respected record of remarkable quality and remains under the editorship of Janet Cochrane. We would like to record our thanks to Pascal Thivillon, of Basement Press in Glaisdale, for his invaluable and voluntary support on the production side of 'Voice', and to the many other volunteers who contribute articles on a wide range of topics. On a sombre note, we were saddened by the passing in December of former 'Voice' editor Sharon Artley, whose touchstone was stunning images of wildlife, especially birds.

Conservation Awards: Over the past year we have made awards to the Silver Seals group of volunteer rangers for their work in maintaining public rights-of-way, to the Ryedale Bridleways Group for improving equestrian access in the national park, and to Moor Sustainable, for running community apple-pressing workshops in the Esk Valley.

Moorsbus: Not strictly a NYMA activity, but NYMA is a close ally and supporter in the form of an annual donation. Sustainable transport and public access to the National Park in all forms are high on our list of priorities.

Planning and policy

North York Moors Authority Draft Management Plan: NYMA responded in depth to the NYMNPA's request for comments on their draft management plan. We are fortunate in having a knowledgeable and experienced planning and policy group (with contributions from George Winn-Darley, Colin Speakman, Tom Chadwick, Andy Wilson and Helen Gundry). NYMA members may download our response from the Members-only home page of <https://membermojo.co.uk/nyma/membershome> . As a user group we are regarded, one park official said, as the North York Moors National Park's 'most critical friend'.

Government's response to the Landscapes Review: In the same vein, NYMA has commented to Defra on its response to the 2021 'Glover' Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs, which is about the future of protected landscapes. In the current era of rapid, unpredictable change, it is vital that NYMA has a clear understanding of what we consider to be the special qualities of our area of interest and upcoming threats to it. We prefer a realistic case-by-case approach to, for example, wildfires, flooding, access, public transport, affordable housing, population decline, privatisation and tourism. If we disagree, for instance, about the use and repair of green lanes, we will put both sides of an argument rather than trying to find middle ground. NYMA's comments on Defra/Glover may also be found on our Members'-only home page - <https://membermojo.co.uk/nyma/membershome>.

The Campaign for National Parks (CNP): This is the umbrella organisation, based in London, campaigning for national parks in England and Wales, drawing on support from the eleven national park societies, of which NYMA is one. NYMA's support for CNP is normally not seen by our membership, but an important part of it is an annual financial levy based on membership numbers. We support CNP's strategy meetings, webinars and requests whenever we can. Their current (2022) theme is 'green recovery' - <https://www.cnp.org.uk> .

Governance

New management structure

Introduced in January 2022, NYMA's new management structure underpins our determination to make improvements in the following areas.

- Clarifies Trustees' role within the legal framework of the Charities Commission.

- Utilises to better advantage the skills and enthusiasms of trustees, officers, members and volunteers.
- Improves membership contact and cooperation within NYMA and with other National Park Societies.
- Looks to create new partnerships with organisations of all kinds that share the same values and objectives.
- Takes a long-term view, especially with respect to upcoming challenges that affect national parks and the countryside.
- Creates a funding base which supports a growing membership across wider demographic and social groups.
- Helps improve and coordinate in-house management of data, methods and procedures.
- Helps spread officer and trustee workload, and improves communication between them.

In essence we have re-organised the day-to-day work of NYMA into the three working groups:

1. Practical activities seen by members and the wider public.
2. Planning and policy development, normally carried out in-house.
3. Governance and finance.

These working groups report to Council on a quarterly basis. Council Trustees then sign off (or refer back) what has been done. In the past, all these were merged together, in some instances blurring responsibilities and functions.

The new structure document may be found at <https://membermojo.co.uk/nyma/membershome> .

New membership system

We have begun using a new and more automated member management system which has several advantages compared to the former one, which was highly labour-intensive. This was partly stimulated by the resignation of our volunteer Membership Secretary, Cal Moore, who did a fantastic job over several years with very limited resources.

The essential differences are that NYMA members have greater access to their own data, the system automatically deals with payments and renewals, a NYMA 'shop' is added, and members may communicate with each other more easily. We are using a British system specially designed for the requirements of smaller charities and organisations with smaller budgets, so its emphasis is on usability. More details, including security arrangements, may be found at <https://membermojo.co.uk/> or in your own member area once you are signed in.

Important: Although the majority of our members use browsers on their computers and smartphones and have email addresses, there are members who prefer to stay with older methods. NYMA will continue to use methods that are currently in place, so that non-computer users are also accommodated. If possible, though, we prefer that you use the online system, and are happy to provide assistance should you need it. In particular, please provide your email address if we do not already have it.

Other points of note

Social media: NYMA now has three social media outlets: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, in addition to its website and emailed newsletter.

NYMA website: <https://www.nyma.org.uk>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wildaboutthemoors/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/nymoorsassoc>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBfMZ6ObPJ3skKNogQx6GqQ>

Outlook

NYMA is faced with many new challenges. Post-Covid our response to them has been vigorous.

We need to expand our membership to generate new income, but also to bring the experience of the glories of our national park to a wider audience.

The special qualities of the Moors are under threat through the uncertain consequences of climate warming, but also through new interventions and administrative changes by government, some welcome, some not so.

A great deal of popular emphasis is currently being given to bringing back biodiversity in the name of climate mitigation and human wellbeing, as well as species restitution. But in the context of 'protected' landscapes, we have to be clear about consequences. What is 'appropriate', where and when? NYMA is keen to have indisputable evidence on a case-by-case basis to help us make up our minds.

New technologies in the name of greening energy supply - solar photo-voltaic arrays, onshore wind turbines, geothermal boreholes, carbon capture and storage schemes - all these, and others, have implications for the visual landscape, and many may be sited in the uplands.

Existing downward trends, such as the loss of public transport access and continuing population decline in Moors' communities, all connected with low investment in public assets like affordable housing, together contribute to accelerating socio-economic decline.

Then there are existential threats already with us like wildfires, flooding and neglected maintenance of historic assets such as footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways, and green lanes.

Too gloomy or just realistic? NYMA has a relentlessly realistic outlook in the face of uncertainties out of our control. Our members love the Moors, and want to stay in love with them. NYMA continues to be a friendly watchdog for those at the sharp end of managing change in the Moors landscape.

AL/JC 31 August, 2022