

Briefing

There are a number of factors which support the case that the North York Moors National Park should receive a share of any future funding through the New Homes Bonus for development which takes place in the National Park but in particular Helmsley.

New Homes Bonus Receipts for Housing Delivered in the National Park

The New Homes Bonus was a successor to the Planning Delivery Grant, which the Authority did receive. The detail of how New Homes Bonus monies should be distributed amongst National Park Authorities in their role as Local Planning Authorities has been left for the NPAs to negotiate with their constituent authorities.

The New Homes Bonus guidance is clear that it is an incentive to Planning Authorities to bring forward land for development, which the National Park as the Planning Authority is doing. It is clear from the consultation stages that the New Homes Bonus was intended to be an inducement to planning authorities and stated that “for the incentive to be most powerful, it must be strongest where the planning decision sits – the lower tier in two areas”. This was further backed up by the government response to the consultation which states that New Homes Bonus should be targeted at “the authority responsible for planning decisions and closest to communities”. A senior minister within the last government also expressed great surprise at discovering that the funding was not directly allocated to National Park Authorities.

There is a clear requirement to recognise the NPA’s role in a formal manner. The Authority acknowledges that Councillors agreed that £13,000 of New Homes Bonus funding was given to the National Park in 2013, however this is only a small proportion of the total New Homes Bonus figure which Ryedale District Council will receive for dwellings completed to date in the National Park, which already amounts to approximately £220,000 over the total 6 year period.

Delivery of Affordable Housing in the National Park

Although the National Park has not had to meet specific housing targets, the delivery of affordable housing in the National Park has been a priority for the Authority. The average number of completions in the Park is around 35 units per year, however around 10 or 12 of these units each year is delivered as affordable housing on exception sites. In the Ryedale area the National Park has successfully delivered 12 dwellings through a highly contentious scheme at Thornton le Dale. In addition to the financial contribution to the Rural Housing Enabler Partnership the Authority also supports the programme by dedicating Officer time to identify sites, develop plans, facilitate open days and also encourage developers to come forward by not charging the legal costs associated with the drafting of s106 agreements to the developers. This is all funded by core National Park resources which could quite easily be dedicated elsewhere on the achievement of our statutory purposes.

Provision of Housing through the Helmsley Plan

The significant levels of development which will be delivered through the Helmsley Plan is considered to warrant further discussion on the levels of New Homes Bonus to be distributed to the National Park. Through the Helmsley Plan a total of 115 dwellings will be brought forward on sites allocated in the National Park plus a 60 unit extra care facility, which will

meet the wider housing needs of the District. Work on the Helmsley Plan has been led by the National Park Authority at significant cost to the Authority.

To date planning approval has already been granted for 20 units at Linkfoot Lane which includes 5 affordable units and Members have recommended approval for 21 dwellings at the Black Swan, which includes 4 affordable units and 60 units at Carlton Road, which includes 24 affordable units. All these units help Ryedale District Council to meet their housing land supply requirements.

The level of development which has come forward as a result of the Helmsley Plan is unprecedented in the North York Moors National Park. The effective joint work on the plan will enable Ryedale District Council to meet a significant proportion of the housing requirements set out in the adopted Local Plan Strategy. Officers at the National Park have provided an instrumental role in bringing forward the site allocations not only in the National Park area but also in the Ryedale area. Once completed these dwellings and those at the remaining allocated site in the National Park will amount to a value worth £1.3million in New Homes Bonus funding based on Band D Council Tax rates.

Costs to the Authority in the provision of Housing

As the National Park is the statutory planning authority the costs of operating the planning service within the Park boundary does not fall to the District and the net cost of the service is entirely borne by the National Park Authority from its Core Funding. This means that the District Council has a lesser financial burden in relation to the delivery of the development management, strategic planning and enforcement functions than those Districts which operate in an area where there is no National Park designation. However the Districts benefit from the results of these planning decisions particularly in relation to additional Council Tax receipts.

In addition to the provision of the statutory planning functions and support to the housing agenda the increase in the population does have an impact on the provision of our other services in particular, there is an increased usage of the rights of way which are maintained to a higher standard within the national park than without under the delegation agreement with NYCC, our Education Service Strategy focuses on reaching out to local schools and the biannual newsletter distributed to all residents and will have an increased cost of publication and postage.

Implications of financial cuts

The National Park Authority is continuing to face significant cuts to its DEFRA grant, which amounts to a 40% reduction since 2010 and it should be noted that this grant represents 70% of the Park's total income. This has meant that the Authority has already had to reduce its contribution to the Rural Housing Enabler Programme by 50% to £2,500. The reduction in funding has led to reduced numbers of staff and it is looking increasingly unlikely that the Authority will have the capacity to focus on the delivery of affordable homes in the future.

The receipt of a proportion of future New Homes Bonus funding resulting from development in Helmsley and the wider National Park could go a long way in ensuring that the Authority can continue to resource the provision of affordable housing development.

Conclusion

The National Park Authority believes that in the light of the comments set out above that receipts from New Homes Bonus funding for development which takes place in the National Park area of Helmsley should primarily be passed onto the National Park Authority.