

Report to **National Park Authority**  
Date **10 December 2024**  
By **Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer**  
Title of Report **Boardroom Apprentice Scheme**  
**Decision**

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**Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to:**

- 1. Note the details of the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme as set out in this report.**
  - 2. Agree that the South Downs National Park Authority act as a Host Board for a Boardroom Apprentice.**
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## **1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1 The Boardroom Apprentice Programme is a 12-month learning, development and placement programme, sponsored by the Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government (MHCLG), with the purpose of developing a pipeline of talent for future boardroom appointments across the UK.
- 1.2 Defra and the Commissioner for Public Appointments have encouraged all National Park Authorities to consider whether they could act as a host board for a boardroom apprentice.
- 1.3 This report outlines details of the Boardroom Apprentice programme and its implications for the Authority and seeks the Authority's agreement to acting as a Host Board in the future.
- 1.4 The Boardroom Apprentice programme represents an opportunity for the Authority to support development opportunities for individuals looking to act as board members and to support MHCLG, Defra, and the Commissioner for Public Appointments' aspirations to provide a sustainable talent pool of future board members.
- 1.5 This programme may also support the Authority's ongoing efforts to introduce a greater diversity of voices into its discussions on policy and decision making at Member level.

## **2. Issues for consideration**

### The Boardroom Apprentice Programme

- 2.1 The Boardroom Apprentice is a twelve-month board learning, development and placement programme. Its vision is to move the board member role from aspiration to reality. And in doing so its aim is to deliver the following:
  - To create a diverse pool of capable, board ready Board Members
  - To provide a sustainable pool of capable, board ready Board Members
  - To enable practical boardroom experience for aspiring Board Members
  - To provide the transfer of knowledge, skills and experience to aspiring Board Members
  - To increase the knowledge and awareness of the role of Board Members

2.2 The programme is built on three pillars:

- **Experience** – 12-month practical, hands on placement.
- **Knowledge and understanding** – transfer of knowledge and understanding through learning.
- **Support** – support through a dedicated board buddy from within the Host Board.



Fig.1 – three pillars of the Boardroom Apprentice programme

2.3 The Boardroom Apprentice programme is open to all ages (18+), all backgrounds, and all abilities. The role is unpaid. To be eligible to apply, a person must not have held a board position on a public, third, or private sector board before.

2.4 A selection panel of former Boardroom Apprentices undertake the selection and matching process of apprentices to boards. Host Boards do not play a part in this process

Acting as a Host Board

2.5 To act as a Host Board, the Authority would provide:

- A seat at the table of meetings of the Authority and P&R Committee for 12 months.
- A Member of the Authority would act as a ‘Board Buddy’ for the apprentice.
- The apprentice would be invited to attend other relevant Member events such as workshops and strategic days.
- The Authority would cover travel and subsistence expenses.
- The Authority would enter into an appropriate agreement with the Boardroom Apprentice which would cover data sharing, confidentiality, and any other codes of conduct or practices that the Boardroom Apprentice would be required to comply with.

2.6 The apprentice would have a seat at the table and a voice in the meetings, but would not be a voting member of the Authority or the P&R Committee.

2.7 The Member acting as ‘Board Buddy’ will be expected to meet the apprentice before meetings to support them in reviewing papers and after meetings to reflect on their participation and experience. Also, during the year to support the apprentice with the placement. These meetings could be in person or online.

What is expected of the apprentice?

2.8 The apprentice will be expected to:

- Attend all Board and Committee meetings during the placement period.
- Attend any other events and activities required by the Host Board.

- Undertake a suite of eight learning modules to enhance their knowledge, understanding and skills in a variety of areas including communication, questioning, partnership working, governance, and their own development.
- Meet regularly with their ‘Board Buddy’ to support learning and development while on the placement.
- Participate in events and activities to share their Boardroom Apprentice journey with others.

**3. Options and cost implications**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Authority agree to act as a Host Board for the Boardroom Apprentice programme. This would be an opportunity for the Authority to support development opportunities for individuals looking to act as board members and to support the development of a sustainable talent pool of future board members. This programme may also support the Authority’s ongoing efforts to introduce a greater diversity of voices into its discussions at Member level.
- 3.2 As part of acting as a Host Board the Authority would commit to covering travel and subsistence expenses, which would vary in value depending on individual needs. There would also be a not insignificant time commitment from the Member of the Authority who would perform the ‘Board Buddy’ role. Some officer time would be required to deal with administrative matters which would be covered within existing resources.
- 3.3 The Authority could decide not to act as a Host Board and not support a Boardroom Apprentice, however, this would mean the Authority missing out on an opportunity to introduce diversity at Member level and would be opposite to the encouragement from Defra and the Commissioner for Public Appointments. If Members have concerns about aspects of the programme or the Authority acting as a Host Board, the Authority’s participation could be reviewed after one year to consider the impacts on the Authority.

**4. Next steps**

- 4.1 Should the Authority agree to act as a Host Board, confirm to MHCLG that the Authority has agreed to act as a Host Board. We will then wait to hear if we have been allocated an apprentice. If the Authority is allocated an apprentice, a suitable Member to undertake the ‘Board Buddy’ role will be identified, the apprentice will be given an induction to the Authority, and the Governance Team will ensure the apprentice receives all relevant invites to Member meetings and workshops over the course of 2025.

**5. Other implications**

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	Yes. The Authority would cover travel and subsistence expenses. A Member would be required to act as a ‘Board Buddy’ which includes a not insignificant time commitment. There would also be some officer time required in dealing with administrative matters.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Skilled and experienced Board Members are required to ensure that Authorities, like the SDNPA, and other public bodies function effectively. The Boardroom Apprenticeship programme aims to develop a pipeline of talent for future appointments.

<b>Implication</b>	<b>Yes*/No</b>
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	The activities and effective functioning of the Board supports the Authority's ability to deliver against all PMP Outcomes and Corporate Plan Objectives.
Links to other projects or partner organisations	MHCLG, Defra
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	The activities and effective functioning of the Board supports the good financial management of the Authority in the delivery of its climate change objectives.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None directly arising from this report
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes. There are no equality issues raised by this report. The Boardroom Apprentice programme aims to create a diverse pool of capable, board ready persons.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None directly arising from this report
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None directly arising from this report
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None directly arising from this report
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None directly arising from this report. Any personal data handled by the Authority will be managed in line with the Authority's GDPR and Data Protection Compliance Policy. Any information shared between Boardroom Apprentice and the Authority would be covered by an appropriate data sharing agreement.

## **6. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision**

- 6.1 As the Authority is not involved in the selection or allocation of the apprentice it is possible, that the Authority may be allocated a person with limited interest in the Authority's work. Even if this was the case, however, the Authority would still be able to provide a positive experience of being on a Board and what is required to support their development and future ambitions. This could also add further to the diversity of the Authority and the voices heard during discussions and decision making.
- 6.2 The Authority may not be allocated an apprentice. This would not come with any penalties as involvement in the Boardroom Apprentice programme is voluntary and the Authority would look to continue to act as a Host Board in future.

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Appendix	None
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive Officer, Director of Landscape and Strategy, Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer, Head of Finance and Corporate Services, Legal Services.
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	<a href="#">Government press release on Boardroom Apprentice</a>

