



# Corporate Plan

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**2013 - 2014**

The Corporate Plan identifies the performance of the Authority in the previous year and identifies priorities for the current year 2013/14.

These key actions are matched against our ability to deliver and are cascaded into team and individual staff programmes of work.

June 2013

## Our Values

**In Northumberland National Park Authority our corporate values are:**

- Respect for each other
- Equality
- Collaborative and supportive working
- Trust and empowerment
- Communicating and Acting
- Strong, clear and inspiring leadership

## Our Culture

**In order to address these values and to achieve its aims the Authority will adopt a culture which:**

- Is open to and embraces change
- Actively supports personal and organisational learning and development
- Values innovation and achievement over systems
- Recognises and celebrates individual and team achievements
- Learns from what we do within a “no blame” culture, with performance management and review contributing positively to our learning
- Has open and honest communications where information is freely shared, feedback given and actions explained
- Where non-adherence to our Culture and Values is challenged and inappropriate behaviours are not tolerated

## Statutory Purposes and Duty

**The role of the National Park Authority is clearly defined in our two statutory purposes which are to:**

- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and
- Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public.

**In pursuing these purposes, we are also required to:**

- Seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park.

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## Section 1. Executive Summary

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### Organisational Change

In December 2010 Northumberland National Park Authority was informed by Defra (the Authority's sponsoring government department) that its budget would be cut by 34% in real terms over the next four financial years. As the Authority has limited opportunities or capital assets on which to develop dependable income generation from year to year, the Authority committed itself to a wholesale reassessment of the organisation with most of the necessary staffing changes and budget cuts implemented in the first financial year 2011/12 and the change management process being completed in the past financial year 2012/13.

In 2012/13 the number of staff employed by the National Park Authority fell to 53 full-time equivalent posts following the closure of two National Park Centres and the completion of the change management process. This is a 35% reduction in staffing from 2010 and is the lowest staff level for over ten years. It is important that expectations built-up over the last 15 years of what the Authority can deliver are now appropriately managed. The Authority accepts this will not be an easy process and will use this Corporate Plan to carefully prioritise its work. The Authority naturally wants to achieve more but must accept that we are no longer able to maintain previous performance in all areas. Working differently and working with our partners, however, there is still much we can achieve and the Authority is determined to drive forward the delivery of the National Park Management Plan whilst addressing some key government priorities.

### Budgets

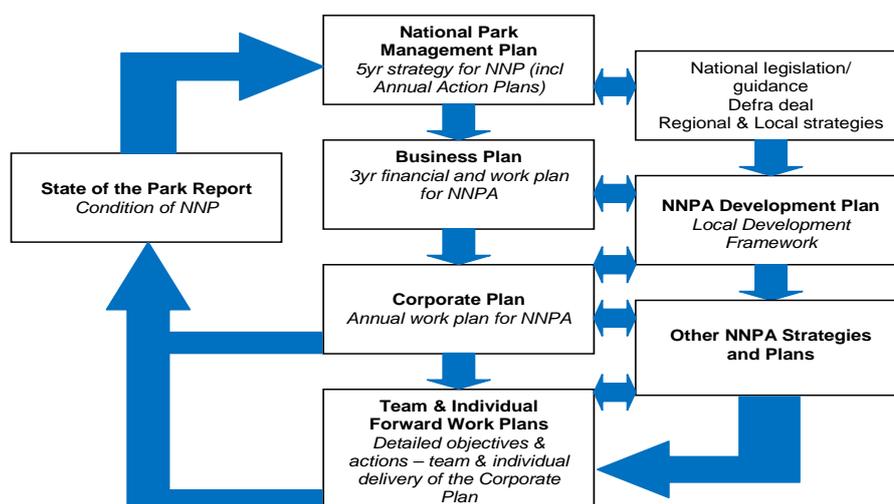
As a result of front-loading budget cuts and receiving funds from the Treasury to part finance the costs of redundancy, the Authority is able to achieve a balanced budget over the next three years. However, this depends on the achievement of challenging commercial income generation targets. The Authority has maintained healthy balances which are required to fund a framework of earmarked projects including The Sill landscape discovery centre and to maintain a degree of flexibility in medium term financial planning.

### Governance

From April 2012 the Authority has been operating more cost effective and streamlined governance arrangements with review and decision making arrangements focused around a smaller number of 'Authority days'. In 2013/14 governance will be further streamlined with the number of Members reducing from 22 to 18 with equal representation of national, county and parish interests.

## Medium Term Business Plan

The Authority held a Policy Conference in October 2012 to determine its priorities and investment strategy and adopted a new Business Plan covering the period 2013 to 2016 in March 2013. The diagram below explains how the three-year Business Plan and the annual Corporate Plan form core elements of the Authority's planning and performance management framework and help guide the day to day work of the Authority. The forward work programme in section 3 of this document is set out against the targets in the new Business Plan.



## Risk Management

The identified primary risks to the effective delivery of this 2013/14 Corporate Plan are:

- A 10% or more loss of core Defra funding;
- National policies and programmes disadvantage Northumberland National Park;
- National planning reforms result in more threats to the special qualities of the National Park;
- Community infrastructure in the National Park fails to provide adequate support for businesses and residents, and;
- The effects of climate change reduce the resilience of National Park businesses and communities.

The Authority will receive quarterly reports on the active management of these risks.

## Our Performance – Delivery Against Plan

Just over half (52%) of our work programme was completely or substantially delivered and a further 34% was partially delivered. 14% of the work programme was not delivered, a similar proportion to the previous year. The change is that a greater proportion of the work programme was only partially delivered compared to previous years. This reduction in delivery is evidence that the Authority's staff capacity is stretched. This suggests that there is a need to either reduce expectations or increase capacity in some work areas to enable delivery. Overall, we performed strongly in our priority work areas of land management, rural development, youth engagement, and 'The Sill' landscape centre ahead of other lower priority work areas.

	Status of 2012/13 actions			
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	
Aim 1	7	3	3	
Aim 2	9	3	2	
Aim 3	6	4	1	
Aim 4	4	4	2	
Aim 5	2	2	1	
Aim 6	7	7	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Total as a %</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### We performed strongly in:

- Successfully gaining funding for the development phase of 'The Sill' with project staff now in place and the project phase up and running;
- Maintaining high levels of visitor satisfaction at National Park Centres and winning the 'best tourist information centre' in the North East regional tourism awards;
- Increasing volunteering which rose by a further 17%. 14% of all volunteering is now contributed by under-represented groups driven by youth engagement initiatives;
- Supporting career pathways for young people. Providing a number of placements, bursaries, and trainee ranger employment opportunities;
- Progressing the National Park's bid to become an International Dark Sky Reserve and promoting the 'astro-tourism' potential of the Park;
- Delivery of land management and biodiversity work including surveying woodland and hay meadows, and gaining funding for bracken control over a 395ha area;
- Developing agri-environment agreements enabling 74% of the farmed land to be covered by an agreement with higher level options;
- The establishment of a Local Nature Partnership and the hosting of the Border Uplands project to improve landscape and biodiversity connectivity;
- Practical conservation of scheduled monuments through the Heritage at Risk project and completing a review of the National Parks Listed Buildings;
- The Cheviot Futures project reaching the final of the Climate Week Awards and being used as a best practice case study by a Government advisory group, and;
- Supporting rural development by securing investment for a rural enterprise hub and broadband improvements.

### We did not perform well in:

- Not developing a management plan and delivering the first phase of improvements for the Walltown recreation site;
- Some under-delivery on the Audience Engagement project including not producing educational materials linked to two sites in the National Park or on-line content;
- Not delivering the Kirknewton conservation area character appraisal;
- Not producing a Vision for the natural environment;
- Not developing a Landscape Strategy, as work is now to be integrated with the vision for the natural environment;

- Not progressing several climate change mitigation actions such as reviewing opportunities for biomass production and use, and encouraging 10 farms to take-up offers for insulation due to lack of capacity;
- Not reviewing the housing needs within the National Park, and;
- Not establishing area based Forums.

**We made progress on the following unforeseen work:**

- Taking advantage of a one-off funding opportunity to improve a section of the border ridge on the Pennine Way National Trail.

**Our Performance – Key Indicators and Trends**

Our performance in 2012/13 for our 43 headline indicators showed that against the previous year’s performance 10 are improving, 9 are static, and 17 are declining. (There was no trend information available for 1, and a further 6 are still to be collected).

2012/13 Performance Indicators – movement from previous year		
Improving	↑	10
Static	=	9
Declining	↓	17
Trend not available	n/a	1
Not available for publication		6
		43

Measuring performance against the previous year does not tell the whole story as static or even declining performance may still represent good performance relative to longer term trends and external benchmarks. Therefore an assessment of performance has been made using trend and benchmark information where it is available. This shows that ‘good’ performance outweighs ‘poor’ performance by a ratio of 1.5:1. It should be noted that ‘good’ performance remained static from the previous year but there was a shift from ‘acceptable’ to ‘poor’ performance in 2012/13 from the previous year.

Performance Indicators - Assessment		
Good Performance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	18
Acceptable Performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	7
Poor Performance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12
Not available for publication		6
		43

Much of the shift to ‘poor’ performance is associated with: reducing website users, where we are unable to determine whether this is a genuine decline due to changed methods of data capture; reduced usability on rights of way, although our priority routes have been maintained; reducing numbers and value of community grants partly due to staff capacity issues and partly due to the tightening external environment, and; very narrowly missing our statutory 80% target for dealing with planning applications in a timely manner (79% achieved).

## **Our Forward Work Programme – 2013/14 Priority Actions**

This Corporate Plan aims to set more realistic targets. This will involve addressing important areas where performance is below realistic expectation and in some areas setting targets which better reflect the much reduced level of resources. It remains an area of concern that whilst the Authority is able to amend its delivery expectations based on much reduced resources, both national and community needs and expectations remain high.

### **The Authority has defined its four key priorities as:**

- Land Management;
- Rural Development;
- Engagement with young people through pathways to work and education; and,
- The Sill Landscape Centre.

Northumberland National Park Authority is committed to focussing on those areas where it can best deliver its priority areas of work. Our expectations are narrower but in priority areas we remain committed to delivering excellent services and achieving significant improvements in outcomes.

### **In 2013/14 we aim to:**

- Target the remaining farms in the National Park for inclusion in the Environmental Stewardship Scheme;
- Expand the monitoring of Higher Level Stewardship agreements and negotiate necessary amendments;
- Work with partners on a number of land and water management initiatives, including the Roman Wall Loughs project, Cheviot Hill Tracks project, and trialling techniques via the Cheviot Futures project;
- Work through the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership to deliver landscape scale cross-boundary projects such as woodland planting opportunities to improve habitat connectivity;
- Continue to host and support the Northumberland Uplands Leader to support rural development initiatives;
- Continue to provide funding and support for sustainable rural development initiatives and review the impact of the Authority's local area approach in supporting rural development;
- Develop a 'Hexham Hub' for the North East rural growth network at our headquarters building in Hexham;
- Complete year one of the three year Youth Mosaic project to increase engagement with young people;
- Deliver the Leader funded Young Northumberland project to improve business skills and involvement in decision making amongst young people from upland rural areas, and;
- Develop a career pathways framework and continue to expand training and volunteering opportunities;
- Deliver the development phase of 'The Sill' including completing detailed designs and finalising the business model to gain a final funding decision on the proposed development;
- Deliver an engagement programme for 'The Sill' to develop a framework of education and engagement activity that will be delivered from the completed Centre.

Tony Gates - Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

June 2013

## Section 2. Delivering the Vision – Our Previous Year’s Performance (2012/13)

*[This section is set out and demonstrates delivery against the priorities in the Authority’s Business Plan 2010-2013]*

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### Aim 1. A Welcoming Park

**In contributing to an exceptional National Park experience we have:**

**Commenced the development phase for ‘The Sill’ Landscape Centre** – In partnership with the Youth Hostel Association (YHA), the Authority successfully secured nearly £400k from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to develop detailed proposals for the redevelopment of the Once Brewed site to create a new landscape discovery centre. Project Officer’s were appointed and by the end of the financial year the contracts for the core external team of architects, surveyors and consultants had been awarded, and work on the business model and activity programmes to be operated from ‘The Sill’ had been progressed. The project team have been working hard to recover lost time associated with delays in receiving the development phase funding and timescales are tight to deliver the development phase by the HLF deadline in March 2014. Further, securing match funding for the project remains a significant challenge.

**Made arrangements to provide high quality visitor infrastructure against a backdrop of budget and service reductions** – The Authority operated a full visitor season at all three of its National Park Centres for the last time in 2012/13 having announced the closure of Rothbury and Ingram due to budget reductions. An average visitor satisfaction score of 89% was achieved across the three centres narrowly missing out on making it seven consecutive years with a score of 90% or above. Visitor feedback relating to the knowledge and helpfulness of staff returned scores averaging 97% demonstrating the staffs dedication and quality of service right up to closure. The Once Brewed Centre won ‘best tourist information centre’ in the North East region tourism awards in 2012, although visitor feedback shows that improvements to the interpretation, information, food and drink offer, and the exterior appearance are required at Once Brewed adding further evidence for the need to upgrade the facilities, all of which are integral to the plans for ‘The Sill’.

Despite the high quality of service, visitor numbers to our Centres were down 15% to 78,867 from 92,998 the previous year and down 32% on the previous 5 year average of 116,475. A number of sources of evidence such as our STEAM<sup>1</sup> tourism model, car parking figures and information from tourism providers suggest a similar pattern of visitor behaviour although the figures for our Centres appear extreme. The general economic climate combined with poor summer weather are thought to be the main reasons for declining visitor numbers although the lack of County or regional destination marketing in recent years may also be a contributory factor.

To mitigate against the loss of the National Park Centres and to improve visitor infrastructure, the Authority entered into partnership with a private sector company ‘Shepherds Walks’ to operate a National Park branded centre from the Rothbury site, and has installed new information points in businesses in Kirk Yetholm, Alwinton, and Greenhead. However, the Authority made no progress with its plans to improve the facilities at Walltown.

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<sup>1</sup> STEAM is a tourism industry model which estimates visitor numbers, visitor days, employment in tourism, and the economic impact of tourism for an area based on information from accommodation providers and attractions.

**Improving access on priority routes** – The Authority’s approach to access is to target its limited resources on the most heavily used routes and to upgrade routes to improve accessibility for the less able. We worked with 8 volunteers to survey 15% of the rights of way network and made improvements to 10 heavily used routes including replacing styles with gates to improve accessibility. We also undertook unplanned work to helicopter lift flagstones onto the Border Ridge on the Pennine Way National Trail taking advantage of a one-off funding opportunity. We will manage the contract to lay a 1,060 metre section of flagged path in the year ahead.

The percentage of the rights of way network that is ‘easy to use’ fell to 66% from 74% the previous year, reversing a 4 year trend of improvement in the indicator. However it should be noted that all priority and promoted routes surveyed remained easy to use in line with our agreed approach.

### To help achieve a wider and more diverse audience we have:

**Established a Youth ‘Mosaic’ project** – We worked with the Campaign for National Parks to successfully secure funding to develop a Youth Mosaic project to build links between National Parks and young people in urban areas. A Project Officer is in post and targets to recruit and train 30 young champions and engage 1,200 young people over the next three years have been developed.

A number of outreach events (e.g. Newcastle Mela and Hexham Children’s Centre) and community outreach projects (e.g. North East Scouts) were supported in the year although capacity constraints, partly due to long term staff absence means that not all planned work in this area has been completed.

Further, the legacy arrangements for the black and ethnic minority Mosaic project had mixed results with Community Champions supporting the Newcastle Mela and involved in recruiting young people for the Youth Mosaic project, but with only one Community Champion regularly involved with the volunteer service.

**Used social media to engage new audiences** – We further developed our social media presence with 1,170 friends on Facebook and 2,270 followers on Twitter. Through social media the Authority is now in regular daily dialogue with a number of local residents and has regular links with the Young Northumberland project and the National Parks Youth Volunteer initiative. Satisfaction with the quality of the Authority’s website remained high at 82%, up from 79% the year before. However, unique users of our website dropped by 69% from 194,000 last year to 60,000 this year. Whilst some reduction in web usage may be the result of fewer visitors to the National Park, it is thought that the main reason for the significant decline in reported numbers is the introduction of the EU directive on the use of ‘cookies’<sup>2</sup> with many web users opting out of using cookies meaning that their usage now goes unrecorded.

### We have contributed to a more diverse range of learning opportunities by:

**Continuing our work with local schools** – We delivered 24 class sized ‘Learning Outside the Classroom’ events covering subjects such as wildlife and climate change. Further, our community archaeology projects delivered 4 outreach events to connect schools with the

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<sup>2</sup> A cookie is information that a website puts on your computer’s hard disk so that it can remember something about you at a later time.

historic environment. 3 National Park Schools Programme schools achieved 'eco-school' status and a further 3 schools signed-up to work towards gaining the award. However, we failed to produce 2 educational packs for sites in the National Park for a second consecutive year.

**Providing career pathways through the work of the Authority** – The Authority is prioritising youth engagement with an emphasis on providing learning opportunities and career pathways. Volunteering increased by 17% from 1,480 days to 1,730 days last year, with the number of days from under-represented groups rising by 49% from 158 days to 236 days. Further, we provided training and support that enabled 46 volunteer led events that attracted 258 participants, and supported volunteer led projects such as the Kirknewton festival on the historic environment. Under-represented groups accounted for 14% of all volunteering last year, up from 11% and 4% in the previous two years with the increase driven by our focus on youth engagement. For example the Youth Volunteer initiative engaged 23 people contributing 50 volunteer days working on footpaths and to survey wildflowers, and the Young Northumberland project engaged 13 young Northumbrians including a Young 'Changemaker' and 6 youngsters from Sweden contributing 155 volunteer days.

The Authority provided career pathways by providing 7 work placements and employing 2 young people as trainee rangers to cover rangers on maternity leave and secondment. Further, we supported a number of bursary training placements including hosting a bursaried archaeologist to deliver a community archaeology project.

**Submitted a bid for a new upland farming training programme** – The Authority has a track record of delivering high quality and successful rural skills training programmes, but was unable to continue this workstream due to changes in the external funding environment. However we submitted a new bid to the HLF "Skills for the Future" fund to deliver a new 3 year upland farming training project to provide training for 16 trainees, building on the success of our previous pilot project. The result of the bid will be known in summer 2013.

## A Welcoming Park – Performance Summary

Indicator Title	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Assm't
Visitor satisfaction with the tourism services and facilities in the National Park	78%	78%	72%	72%	☐ =
% of users satisfied with 'promoting understanding' services	92%	92%	88%		
% of users whose learning increased about Northumberland National Park as a result of using 'promoting understanding' services	76%	84%	69%		
% of users of 'promoting understanding' services from under-represented groups	9%	41%	28%		
National Park Centre satisfaction-effectiveness survey score	90.35%	89.96%	90.58%	88.76%	☑ ↓
Website usage - unique users and user satisfaction					
a) Unique users (,000)	217	232	194	60*	☒ ↓*
b) % rating the website as 'very good' or 'excellent'	82.9%	72.8%	79.3%	81.9%	☑ ↑
Volunteer Days					

a) Number of volunteer days led by Northumberland National Park Authority	1,124	1,129	1,480	1,730	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
b) Number of those days attended by 'under represented' groups	-	45	158	236	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
Percentage of footpaths and other rights of way easy to use by the public					
a) % easy to use even though they may not follow the exact definitive line	68.30	71.20	73.90	65.60	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↓
b) % easy to use that follow the exact definitive line	68.30	71.20	73.90	65.60	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↓
c) % signposted where they leave the road	93.30	100.00	90.00	100.00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑

Good Performance

Acceptable Performance

Poor Performance

↑ Improving Trend

= Static Trend

↓ Declining Trend

## Aim 2. A Distinctive Place

To help maintain the sense of inspiration and tranquillity we have:

**Made significant progress on designating the National Park as an 'International Dark Sky Reserve'** – The Authority has been working in partnership with the Keilder Water and Forest Park on a bid to become Europe's largest protected dark skies area. We undertook wide consultation and secured considerable support for our bid from residents and stakeholders, completed a survey of lighting installations, and supported residents with advice and funding to reduce light pollution. We are current producing a lighting management plan to guide planning applicants and inform planning decisions, and are scheduled to submit our bid for 'International Dark Sky Reserve' status in July 2013.

**Targeted overhead power lines for undergrounding** – The Authority has been working with Northern Power Grid to map and prioritise overhead power lines for undergrounding to improve the landscape of the National Park and the character of settlements. 1,580 metres of power lines were undergrounded around Elsdon in the last year and the Authority has fed back issues to Northern Power Grid in an attempt to reduce disruption and improve communication when work is undertaken in other settlements. Undergrounding at Ingram is scheduled for 2013.

However, the Authority did not adopt a vision for the natural environment as planned and has again failed to adopt a Landscape Strategy in the last year and should consider whether production of this strategy is a true priority.

To safeguard and enhance the natural qualities and diverse habitats we have:

**Completed Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) actions** – We completed a wide variety of habitat and species work in the last year. Much of this work was undertaken with the help of volunteers or by designing prescriptions to be included in agri-environment agreements. Examples of habitat and species work included: Removing conifer regeneration from mires at Pundershaw and Chartners and blocking grips at Sundaysight and Hareshaw; Securing funding and organising 395ha of bracken control to improve moorland habitats; Protecting woodland by removing rhododendron at Bonnyrigg Hall and Hepple Whitefield; Planting goat willow to enhance woodland and to provide early food sources for Bumblebees; Surveying 26 hay meadows and adding seed to 13 fields; Completing a survey of waxcaps, thought to be of national importance; Completing a Black Grouse population viability analysis;

Completing wading bird and Ring Ouzel surveys, and; training of volunteers to conduct Curlew surveys in summer 2013. However, we did not revise and simplify the Biodiversity Action Plans for priority habitats and species as originally planned.

99% of the 12,453ha of Sites of Special Scientific Interest were in 'favourable' (29%) or 'recovering' (70%) condition in 2012 representing a 1% drop from 100% that had been achieved for the previous 3 years. Condition was static for the top category of 'favourable' with a small reduction in the area that is 'recovering' but this is understood to be caused by an administrative change that amalgamated and reclassified a number of smaller SSSI units. The bigger picture is that there was no progress for a second year against our target to move land from 'recovering' to 'favourable' condition. Of the 17 habitats or species covered by Biodiversity Action Plans, 9 are considered to be improving, 4 stable, and 4 declining representing no change in assessment in the last year.

**Established a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and hosted the 'Border Uplands' habitat opportunity project** – The Authority and its partners made a successful bid to Defra to establish the Northern Upland Chain LNP covering the Northumberland National Park, Yorkshire Dales National Park, North Pennines AONB, and Nidderdale AONB and has begun a number of projects to improve habitat improvement and connectivity over the LNP area.

We also hosted a Project Officer to deliver a pilot project to map habitat improvement and connectivity opportunities for the Border Uplands area within the National Park. Moorland, woodland, and grassland opportunities were identified and a practical project schedule produced. A number of habitat improvement initiatives were co-ordinated through the project including restoring 131ha of blanket bog by blocking 35km of grips and creating 35ha of new native woodland.

**We have assisted with the understanding, value and care of the historic environment and archaeological heritage by:**

**Delivering year 2 of the Heritage At Risk project** – The second year of the project consolidated the position following a very successful first year. The focus was to continue to support the volunteers to undertake monument condition surveys and to progress practical conservation projects. Volunteers conducted 69 surveys and completed conservation work on 15 sites, removing 7 monuments from 'at risk'. The percentage of the National Park's 424 monuments considered to be 'at risk' improved to 48% from 50% the previous year.

There has been no movement in the Listed Building indicator with 23 (10%) of the Parks 229 Listed Buildings remaining 'at risk'. The Authority undertook a complete re-survey of the National Park's Listed Buildings in the year with the results to be reported in 2013.

**Supporting community archaeology** – The Authority is hosting a bursaried Project Officer to deliver a 1 year community archaeology project, supporting the Officer to gain experience and qualifications. Project targets have been established and significant progress made to create a new community archaeology group in the south of the National Park and a joint Young Archaeologist Club (YAC) with the North Pennines AONB. A number of engagement events have been held including events with Newcastle College.

We also supported a volunteer led historic environment festival at Kirknewton, but the Kirknewton conservation area character appraisal was again not completed and we should consider whether this is a genuine priority to progress at the current time.

## A Distinctive Place – Performance Summary

Indicator Title	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Assm't
% SSSI and NNR in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition in:					
a) NPA Management	100%	100%	100%	100%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =
b) the National Park as a whole	100%	100%	100%	99%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↓
Changes in areas and populations of biodiversity importance (LBAP condition)					
a) Improving	9	10	9	9	
b) Stable	4	3	4	4	<input type="checkbox"/> =
c) Declining	4	4	4	4	
Number of Listed Buildings 'at risk' in the National Park	25	23	23	23	
a) Number of Listed Buildings 'at risk' rescued during the year	0	2	0	0	<input type="checkbox"/> =
b) % of Listed Buildings 'at risk' rescued during the year	0.0%	8.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
Changes in Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) risk status					
a) Number in High risk category	65	64	49	48	
b) Number in Medium risk category	173	176	163	157	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
c) Number in Low risk category	192	190	212	219	
a) Number of scheduled monuments 'at high or medium risk' conserved during the year (through NNPA actions)	12	0	38	15	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↓
b) % of scheduled monuments 'at high or medium risk' conserved during the year (through NNPA actions)	5.0%	0.0%	15.8%	3.5%	
a) Number of Conservation Areas	1	1	1	1	
b) % of Conservation Areas with up-to-date character appraisals	0%	0%	0%	0%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =
Use of the Building Design Guide in relevant planning decisions					
a) Number of relevant applications	40	26	36	41	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
b) Percentage of relevant application where Building Design Guide used	37.50%	80.77%	100.00%	95.12%	
Positive planning actions for protected species in relevant planning applications					
a) Number of relevant applications	17	9	15	17	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =
b) Percentage of relevant applications with actions for protected species	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Good Performance

Acceptable Performance

Poor Performance

↑ Improving Trend

= Static Trend

↓ Declining Trend

### **Aim 3. A Living Working Landscape for Now and The Future**

**We have contributed to new and better approaches to sustainable land and water management by:**

**Continued to add value to agri-environment schemes** – We continued to use our local area based approach to understand how individual agri-environment agreements could fit together on a landscape scale and then worked with farmers and Natural England to design the most appropriate agreements. In the last year we helped to develop 16 new Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreements. There are now 256 Environmental Stewardship agreements covering the National Park, 130 at Entry Level covering 13,214ha, and 126 at Higher Level covering 62,576ha<sup>3</sup>. The area of land covered by agreements that include HLS options increased by 1,745ha in the last year representing 74% of the farmed area of the Park (up from 72% and 64% in the previous two years).

We were able to include a significant project to restore Harehaugh hill fort within one agreement, a long standing ambition of the Authority. We also worked with Natural England to implement a prioritised HLS monitoring framework, conducted 9 monitoring visits, and negotiated the necessary amendments to agreements.

**Working to improve water quality** – The Authority has worked in partnership with the Environment Agency, Natural England and a number of River Trusts to develop plans to improve water quality and land management in river catchments across the National Park. Authority managed projects such as the Border Uplands and Cheviot Futures projects combined with our work on agri-environment agreements have contributed to water management initiatives aimed to hold and slowly release water preventing sediment pollution and flooding of water courses. Moorland grip blocking and woodland planting along water courses are examples of practical interventions.

We also secured funding and developed a plan for a project to research the impact of erosion from hill tracks on water pollution and to test methods to reduce erosion from tracks. However, delivery of this project was not completed March 2013 as originally planned and will now take place in 2013/14.

**We have contributed to increasing understanding about, and demonstrating the practice of, sustainable development and responses to climate change by:**

**Continuing to deliver climate change mitigation work** – The Authority has reduced the amount of climate change work it undertakes following reductions in staffing and dedicated resources, but we continued to support communities and businesses with energy reduction and renewable energy generation projects through our sustainable development and local area funding. Further, we continued to work on a long term project to develop the on-farm micro-hydro potential for five farms in the Cheviots. We monitored energy usage on 3 farms to establish the micro-hydro potential and progressed one project ensuring drainage consents were applied for. However, we did not progress work on the potential supply and demand for biomass, or review our climate change action plan as originally intended.

**Continued to deliver climate change adaptation work** – We continued to integrate climate adaption measures throughout our mainstream land and water management work and continued to deliver the Cheviot Futures climate adaption project.

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<sup>3</sup> The figure for HLS includes all land within the National Park boundary for farms with HLS agreements, but includes land on those farms which is managed under entry level options as it is not possible to split the data from Natural England.

The success of the Cheviot Futures project was recognised with a Government advisory group using the project as a best practice case study on multi-benefit projects delivering European funding and sustainable growth. The project was a finalist in the Climate Week Awards 2013, and Natural England is now trialling the farm resilience planning approach which was first piloted by the project, in the North West of England.

In the last year the project has completed a further 4 farm resilience plans identifying natural hazards and the necessary mitigation, and delivered 8 practical mitigation/resilience measures including trialling agricultural flood defence products, strategic hedgerow planting to reduce wind erosion, and riverbank protection work at Kirknewton. The project has continued to investigate innovative wildfire solutions such as the use of foam firefighting products and has secured funding to trial a wildfire automatic detection system.

### **To assist business growth in sectors which sensitively make use of the natural, historical and cultural qualities of the National Park we have:**

**Continued to support business projects** – The Authority provided advice and support to many businesses and administered grants to encourage sustainable business growth through the Action Area funds, Sustainable Development Fund and Leader funds. Overall 22 businesses were supported with grants totalling £245k and leveraging in £581k of matched funding. Last year saw an increase in the number of business projects supported after a particularly slow 2011/12 and project numbers are now in line with the previous three year average. The grant to match funding ratio remained static with each £1 of grant attracting £2.37 in match funding. The match funding ratio for the last three years is lower than the pre-2010 levels with the tight economic climate and general confidence cited as the primary reasons.

**Promoted tourism initiatives linked to the special qualities of the National Park** – Complementing the Authority's bid for the National Park to become an International Dark Sky Reserve, we have been promoting the Park as an 'astro-tourism' destination, supporting 2 stargazing events and a dark sky tourism training seminar attended by 25 businesses.

We supported 2 new outdoor business start-ups through the Sustainable Development Fund, Navigate Northumberland and Cycle Pad. We continued to support the Bellingham Blast, Northern Rock Cyclone, and Wooler Wheel cycling events, and we worked with 3 businesses that delivered 2 days of outdoor activities linked to National Parks Week.

The Authority's Chief Executive continued on the interim board of the newly re-established Northumberland Tourism and a funding partnership has been agreed for the next three years to ensure Northumberland is marketed as a tourism destination.

## A Living Working Landscape – Performance Summary

Indicator Title	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Assm't
Adapting to climate change	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =
Business grant awards in line with National Park Authority purposes					
a) Number of grants awarded	28	21	18	22	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
b) Value of grants awarded	£142,918	£195,294	£110,342	£245,163	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
c) Value of levered/matched funding	£556,274	£248,534	£260,263	£581,312	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
Businesses and groups using the Green Tourism Business Scheme	19	18	17	Not collected	
Importance of the visitor economy (value & volume of tourism)					
a) Value of tourism (£ million) - Northumberland National Park	£71.3	£65.5	£66.1	PI reports previous years data	<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
b) Number of tourists (million) - Northumberland National Park	1.51	1.36	1.37		
a) Value of tourism (£ million) - Action Areas (inc. NNP)	£155.6	£150.7	£151.6		<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
b) Number of tourists (million) - Action Areas (inc. NNP)	1.79	1.65	1.67		

Good Performance

Acceptable Performance

Poor Performance

↑ Improving Trend

= Static Trend

↓ Declining Trend

## Aim 4. Thriving Communities

**We supported communities' connections to, and appreciation of, the National Park and engaged them in shaping its future by:**

**Engaging communities with the Authority's work** – The Authority appointed 2 local independent business/community representatives to participate in reviewing our work which has provided valuable feedback and advice. We held the fourth annual National Park Forum in October 2012 to hear feedback from residents and stakeholders and to gain input to 'The Sill' project. The National Park Awards were presented at the Forum providing recognition to individuals and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to protecting and enhancing the National Park.

However, we did not complete a review of our local area based approach and we did not establish new Local Area Forums as we had planned.

**Supporting communities to develop Neighbourhood Plans** – We continued to work with the community of Tarset, and jointly with the Bellingham and Wark communities to develop Neighbourhood Plans for their areas to ensure local views are incorporated into future development proposals.

**We have striven to ensure effective infrastructure (services and facilities) are available to support communities in and around the National Park by:**

**Undertaking our annual facilities survey for the National Park** – The survey showed that communities in the National Park continue to have access to essential services such as

shops and schools but it also shows that the availability and/or quality of broadband connections is still a major issue and that mobile coverage is patchy.

**Working to improve rural broadband** – The Authority has helped ensure most of the National Park’s residents are included in broadband improvement schemes, but these initiatives are being delivered slower than anticipated. A £465k project covering the Rothbury/Simonside area is due to be implemented in 2013 and a £2m Defra scheme covering the North Tyne and Coquetdale is to be delivered as part of County programme by 2015.

**We have helped to ensure people have opportunities to work in, live in and contribute to resilient communities in and around the National Park by:**

**Continuing to support local communities** – We have used our local area approach to provide advice, support and funding to many community groups. In total the Action Area funds, Sustainable Development Fund, and Leader have provided 41 grants totalling £175k and leveraging in £175k of matched funding. The number of community grants is down from 51 the previous year and the three year average of 71. Last year saw fewer projects funded with smaller average grants and lower match funding ratios than in previous years. This suggests that the capacity and confidence of communities to develop projects in the current climate is reduced, especially for larger projects where match funding is required.

**Supporting rural development initiatives** – The Authority worked with the County Council and 3 estates to make a successful bid to the Rural Growth Fund to develop a rural enterprise hub consisting of a cluster of live/work units in the North Tyne area. Progress on developing plans has been slower than we hoped, but we have helped finance and select consultants to develop plans and conduct market testing for each estate.

We have continued to host the Northumberland Uplands Leader and supported the Local Action Group (LAG) to deliver rural development initiatives and bridge outcome gaps in their strategy. Initiatives have included developing the local market for woodfuels and delivering the North East regions first ‘firewood fair’ supporting 22 local businesses. The Authority has supported the LAG with its youth engagement objectives by hosting the Young Northumberland project that is providing business and enterprise training and exchange visit opportunities to youngsters in rural Northumberland. This work directly compliments the Authority’s own priority of youth engagement and providing career pathway opportunities.

**Thriving Communities – Performance Summary**

Indicator Title	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Assm’t
Community grant awards in line with National Park Authority purposes					
a) Number of grants awarded	69	93	51	41	☒ ↓
b) Value of grants awarded	£365,840	£551,926	£393,014	£175,289	☒ ↓
c) Value of levered/matched funding	£719,319	£1,014,686	£453,146	£175,248	☒ ↓

Good Performance     
  Acceptable Performance     
  Poor Performance  
 ↑ Improving Trend     
 = Static Trend     
 ↓ Declining Trend

## Aim 5. A Valued Asset

**We have promoted the social and economic contribution of the National Park to the North East of England by:**

**Contributing to a study on the economic value of England's National Parks** – The Authority worked with National Parks England and a consultant to produce a report on the economic contribution of National Parks which concluded that National Parks contribute up to £6.3bn to the national economy each year, equivalent to the UK aerospace industry.

Northumberland National Park contributes £81m to the North East regional economy from within its boundary, and influences the contribution of £166m including the settlements along its boundary. The cost of the National Park Authority to the public purse is £2.7m a year and represents less than 50p per person to the six million people that live within an hour's drive of the National Park and can share its benefits.

**The National Park has contributed to a broader network of protected areas by:**

**Establishing a Local Nature Partnership (LNP)** – The Authority and its partners made a successful bid to Defra to establish the Northern Upland Chain LNP covering the Northumberland National Park, Yorkshire Dales National Park, North Pennines AONB, and Nidderdale AONB. A number of landscape scale projects to improve habitat and species conservation, and landscape scale delivery of eco-systems services over the LNP area have been started.

Back in 2011 the Authority worked with a wide partnership in an unsuccessful attempt to establish a Border Uplands 'Nature Improvement Area' covering the National Park and neighbouring designated areas. This work was not wasted as the Authority was able to secure funding and deliver a Border Uplands habitat mapping and improvement project for the area within the National Park in the last year. It is intended to expand the work from this project to cover the entire LNP area.

**We have helped ensure the value of the National Park is clearly demonstrated in the policies and actions of those who have influence on the National Park by:**

**Coordinating the National Park Management Plan Partnership** – We have continued to coordinate the Management Plan Partnership, bringing key partners together twice a year to ensure positive actions for the National Park are embedded within partners' policies and plans and to monitor progress.

We have also input into the consultation process for the County Councils draft Core Strategy to ensure the interests of the National Park are represented, and actively contributed to the North East Farming and Rural Advisory Network (NEFRAN) to influence Defra and the North East Local Enterprise Partnerships programmes. However, we did not review our Partnership Engagement Plan.

## A Valued Asset – Performance Summary

Indicator Title	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Assm't
National awareness of Northumberland National Park	3%	3%	3%	2%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↓
Partner survey score - NNPA as an effective partner	TBC	75.0%	2013	2013	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a

Good Performance

Acceptable Performance

Poor Performance

↑ Improving Trend

= Static Trend

↓ Declining Trend

## Aim 6. An Excellent Organisation

### We have continued to deliver value for money through:

**Identifying our priorities for the next three years** – We reviewed our delivery for the last three years and set our priorities and budgets for the next three years in our Business Plan 2013-2016 to ensure we have a clear set of medium term targets.

We made some progress against 4 of the 6 outstanding improvements from our National Park Authorities Performance Assessment but as previously outlined in this document we did not review the impact of our local area approach or review our Partnership Engagement Plan.

**A balanced budget for the medium term** – We have been effective in reducing the running costs of the Authority with cuts to activities and programmes of work meaning that ongoing costs are ahead of the planned budget cuts programme. However, due to the depressed nature of the local economy and rural tourism in particular our income streams are less than estimated and have had to be revised downwards. Overall the budget plan is on target but the Authority's aims to generate additional income are behind target and a new direction will need to be found for a better chance of success in the next three years.

**Improving ICT and communications whilst saving money** – We completed the migration of our website to a more efficient platform and rationalised our virtual private network to improve remote working – in three years the number of costly to purchase, run and maintain servers has reduced from 22 to just 10. We replaced the staff intranet site and file sharing system to a cheaper and less resource intensive system, and changed our geographic information software also to an open source solution to save money.

We have updated our stock of photographic images and improved our presence on Facebook and Twitter. With additional steer from management the Authority produced regular local resident newsletters and towards the end of the year corporate communications had a more effective focus on the organisation's key priority areas. However we did not produce and publicise a number of case studies showcasing our work, and the planned review of the communications function has been deferred to quarter 2 in 2013/14.

**Governance** – during the year the Department for Communities and Local Government made national changes to the member Code of Conduct and Defra continued to consider changes to National Park governance arrangements. Meanwhile the Authority established a new local code of conduct, embedded new streamlined and lower cost governance structures in anticipation of the findings of the Defra work on governance of National Parks. Changes included co-opting local people and experts to provide external support and challenge as part of the Authority's review process.

**Providing effective Development Management services** – In the last couple of years the planning service has experienced a large number of applications relative to prior years and has increased the amount of pre-application advice and monitoring and enforcement activity that we undertake. This last year the service dealt with 89 pre-application enquiries, 53 planning applications, 18 other determinations, and responded to 33 neighbouring Authority consultations. Of the 53 planning applications 100% of 'major', 80% of 'minor', and 78% of 'other' applications were dealt with within statutory deadlines with the result for 'other' applications falling short of government targets.

Only 62% of the 89 pre-applications were dealt with within our discretionary 28 day deadline (compared to 87% of 127 enquires the year before). Overall only 79% of the 53 applications were dealt with within the statutory deadlines (compared to 87% of 52 applications the year before) and there was a marked difference in timeliness between the first and second half of the year with only half of the 18 application in the second half of the year in time (compared to 94% of 35 in the first half). Further, no customer satisfaction survey was conducted this year. On a more positive note 8 well received planning surgeries were held in 4 National Park settlements attracting 37 people to discuss planning matters, and a new planning IT system was successfully launched.

### **We have developed our staff, volunteers and board members through:**

**Staff development** – The last year saw the completion of the change management process started in 2010 with the closure of the Rothbury and Ingram National Park Centres and the final loss of staff associated with the process. The Authority's human resource policies were updated to reflect the new structure and provide clarity to staff, but there was limited success in conducting a skills audit. Staff sickness levels dropped to an average of 5.76 days per person (from 8.68 days the previous year) as the amount of long term illness fell and remains low compared to industry averages.

**Volunteer development** – A review of volunteering in 2010 changed the focus of volunteering, supporting a smaller core team of volunteers with increased training, increasing opportunities for ad hoc volunteering through community projects, and placed a major emphasis on opportunities for young people within the Authority's work. This has resulted in a 53% increase in total volunteering and a 524% increase in volunteering from under-represented groups (driven by youth volunteers) in two years which is clearly very strong performance in a priority area of work.

**Member development** – We implemented the findings of the governance review moving away from sub-committees and enhancing the role of the full Authority in overseeing our work. The new arrangements saw an 'Authority day' each month aimed at increasing Member attendance and participation but unfortunately Member attendance declined to 68%, down from 78% the year before and the previous three year average of 81%.

### **We have worked through partnerships by:**

**Co-coordinating the Management Plan Partnership** – We have continued to meet with our key partners to monitor progress in delivering the National Park Management Plan and to integrate our work programmes to ensure coordinated and efficient delivery. We have worked in a number of critical partnerships such as with the Youth Hostel Association on 'The Sill' and with partners in the Local Nature Partnership.

However, we did not complete one of our performance improvement actions to review our Partnership Engagement Plan for a second year.

### We have ensured our services are available to all in our diverse society by:

**Making significant progress on our priority of Youth Engagement** – We made significant progress on engaging young people through the Youth Volunteer initiative and by hosting the Young Northumberland project. We have provided trainee employment, placements and bursaried positions to support career pathways and supported a Youth Changemaker to run events to understand the issues and opportunities facing young people in the rural uplands. We continued to operate an Equality Forum and retained ‘Achieving’ status under the Equality Framework.

### We have ‘walked the talk’ on climate change by:

**Embedding energy reduction measures** – By March 2012 we reduced our carbon emissions by a significant 39% over three years from our baseline in 2008. The reductions were driven by improvements to our estate such as improving insulation, installing renewable energy generation, and reducing energy consumption from IT systems. We have also introduced fuel efficient and electric vehicles to our pool and ranger fleet and reduced the number of meeting days for Authority Members. Having completed the large impact improvements, our approach is now to monitor and retain these gains. Carbon emission figures for 2012/13 were not available at the time of writing.

### An Excellent Organisation – Performance Summary

Indicator Title	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Assm't
Inclusive Authority - level of the Equality Standard attained	Level 3	Level 3	Achieving	Achieving	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =
Number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness absence per FTE	4.62	5.36	8.68	5.76	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
Member participation in attending committees	86%	79%	78%	68%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↓
Income generation - trading accounts profit performance (£'000)	136.4	129.6	118.7	106.6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↓
Financial outturn (variance to forecast reserves position as a % of total expenditure)	3.5%	2.8%	4.5%	8.0%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↓
IT critical system available in core working hours	93.25%	97.76%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Processing of planning applications (major, minor, other)					
a) % of major applications determined within 13 weeks	100%	75%	100%	100%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =
b) % of minor applications determined within 8 weeks	95%	88%	80%	80%	<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
c) % of 'other' applications determined within 8 weeks	96%	94%	93%	78%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↓
% of planning applicants satisfied with the service received	72%	88%	82%	Not collected	n/a
Carbon Dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ) reduction from National Park Authority operations					

a) Percentage reduction in CO <sub>2</sub> emissions	9.6%	9.0%	26.4%	Not yet	n/a
b) Total CO <sub>2</sub> emissions from Authority operations (Kg)	279,252	253,403	187,240	collected	

Good Performance

Acceptable Performance

Poor Performance

↑ Improving Trend

= Static Trend

↓ Declining Trend

## Section 3. Delivering the Vision – Forward Work Programme (2013/14)

*[This section is set out against the new priorities and targets in the Authority's Business Plan 2013-2016]*

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### **Aim 1. A Welcoming Park**

*'Our aim is to put people and their connections with the landscape at the heart of the National Park.'*

#### **The Sill: Unspoilt Landscapes, Inspiring People –**

a) Deliver the development phase of 'The Sill' by March 2014.

##### **Targets:**

- o Undertake public consultation between April and October 2013;
- o Complete archaeological, economic and environmental assessments;
- o Complete the activities programme and set a sustainable business plan;
- o Complete detailed design, specification and costings;
- o Secure £2.5m match funding, and;
- o Apply for HLF round 2 funding.

b) Develop and integrate 'The Sill' engagement/delivery model with new and existing audience engagement partners to achieve 4,700 engagement days by 2016. By the end of the development phase (between 2012 and 2014) we will deliver 2,340 engagement days.

##### **Targets:**

- o 10 community focus group design consultation meetings with 10 people per meeting (100 person days);
- o 4 community design consultation open events with 50 people per event (200 person days);
- o 30 students at 2 days per student for 16 weeks (960 person days);
- o 2 student work placements for 12 weeks (120 person days);
- o 2 students work placements for 60 weeks (600 person days);
- o 20 conservation events with 10 people (200 person days);
- o 15 project partners with 2 people each in 4 meetings (120 person days), and;
- o John Muir Award Leadership Training courses, two 2 day courses for 10 people (40 person days).

#### **Youth engagement –**

c) Work with the Campaign for National Parks to deliver year 1 of the Mosaic Youth Project to engage young people with National Parks.

##### **Targets:**

- o Recruit 10 young champions to build links between Northumberland National Park and young people;
- o Support the 10 young champions so each can engage a further 20 young people (200 young people engaged in the year);

- Ensure at least 6 young champions are from urban based organisations to encourage sustained engagement with such groups;
  - Involve young champions in the consultation process of 'The Sill';
  - Encourage and support young champions to become involved in the governance of the Authority (through presentations, review meetings, equalities forum) and other regional organisations, in particular Northumberland Youth Cabinet.
- d) Continue the development and delivery of the National Park Schools Model working closely with the 26 schools in and around the National Park and the high schools they feed into.

**Targets:**

- Support 5 National Park Schools Programme schools to achieve eco school status;
  - Rangers to deliver 10 school based environmental activities to engage National Park Schools with the natural environment;
  - Deliver 20 Learning Outside the Classroom activities prioritising National Park Schools Programme schools. Specifically, delivering the 'New Naturalist' programme to High Schools; 'Moorland Indicators of Climate Change Initiative' (MICCI) to Middle Schools; and the production of at least 1 Children's Walks Book with First Schools;
  - Provide staff and funding to support delivery of the Glendale Children's Day engaging over 1,000 children.
- e) Develop a project to identify how 'The Sill' core engagement activity will signpost to independent exploration and discovery of the National Park beyond the Hadrian's Wall corridor ensuring fit with other Audience Engagement activity and the production of a fully integrated programme.

**Targets:**

- Project bid developed by end June 2013, and;
  - Year 1 project outputs delivered to inform the activity plan for 'The Sill' (extra school engagement, extra outreach, and interpretive material identified through theme teams) by the end of December 2013.
- f) Develop a career pathways framework to identify opportunities for training, volunteering, and work experience across the National Park.

**Targets:**

- Develop a careers prospectus identifying training and careership opportunities offered by the Authority;
- Publicise training and career opportunities at careers fairs and university open days;
- Engage young people with work in protected landscapes by providing a minimum of 10 School and University work placements and student bursaries across the Authority's four departments;
- Deliver the Young Volunteer initiative to enable 10 young people to be regularly participating as Youth Volunteers in the Authority's volunteer service;
- Develop conservation skills career pathways with local high schools linked to the John Muir Award and deliver a programme of vocational field skills training for 8 students leading to the Discovery and Explorer awards;
- Implement a three year Upland Farming Traineeship, if HLF Bid to Skills for the Future funding is successful.

- g) Host and deliver the Leader Youth project to develop the work skills and experience of young people in the Northumberland uplands.

**Targets:**

- Coordinate an exchange programme with Leader Linne in Sweden for 15 young people;
- Deliver a series of 'work ready' training events including business open days and a careers event, and;
- Work with a young Changemaker to ensure the reality for young people in and around the National Park is included in appropriate development discussions and planning.

**Visitor welcome and infrastructure –**

- h) Operate the Once Brewed National Park Centre to a high standard.

**Targets:**

- Maintain 90%+ visitor satisfaction levels, and;
- Enter the Centre for the national Visit England 'England for Excellence' award.

- i) Improve visitor facilities in the north of the National Park to mitigate the closure of Authority run centres.

**Targets:**

- Develop or pilot the Coquetdale Centre, Rothbury as a National Park branded visitor information point in partnership with Shepherd's Walks;
- Improve the toilet and information facilities at Bulby's Wood in the Breamish Valley;
- Develop on and off-site interpretation for the Yeavinger landscape to be installed in the newly conserved Old Palace building, and update online information;
- Install interpretation at strategic locations (e.g. Carter Bar), and;
- Review the existing information points and where appropriate enhance existing and develop new information points and business ambassadors.

- j) Develop the Authority's sites at Walltown and Housesteads.

**Targets:**

- Develop proposals for the development of the Walltown recreation site to improve the facilities, access and interpretation (with an emphasis on improving accessibility and provision for families and young people), and;
- Enhance parking provision at Housesteads as part of the visitor experience improvements being delivered in partnership with the National Trust and English Heritage.

- k) Improve public access by maintaining and improving the rights of way network.

**Targets:**

- Improve National Trails by working with Natural England and the Highway Authorities to deliver the outcomes of the National Trail Review;
- Manage the contract for the installation of a new 1,060 metre flagged path at Auchope Cairn on the Border Ridge on the Pennine Way National Trail;

- Survey the condition of 15% of the Public Rights of Way network (engaging 10 volunteers to survey 10% and completing national benchmarking surveys for a further 5%) to inform the preparation of an annual maintenance/improvement programme;
  - Deliver schedules of work to improve accessibility on the most heavily used rights of way and sites, replacing stiles with gates and making surface improvements. Focus on improvements to Salter's Road, the route that links the Haltwhistle Burn Path, and;
  - Improve usability of the rights of way network by delivering a waymarking project to replace old and missing waymarking discs where routes leave/intersect with roads.
- l) Improve the visitor welcome and orientation around the National Park.

**Targets:**

- Develop and train a 'Welcome Team' of 8 volunteers to act as ambassadors for the National Park, and;
- Develop the National Park Visitor Guide, including an online version on prominent websites and printed copies distributed regionally to key attractions.

**Activities and events –**

- m) Deliver a programme of activities and events targeted at engaging new and under-represented audiences.

**Targets:**

- Deliver National Parks Week 2013 on the theme "Actively Yours" focusing on engaging the public with the activities available in the National Park;
- Promote the astro-tourism potential of the National Park by making improvements to the Cawfields Dark Sky Discovery site, engaging communities and businesses, and supporting events;
- Raise awareness to urban and regional audiences by attending urban/ urban fringe events in towns and cities to the east and west (Cumbria) of the National Park;
- Work in partnership with the Disabled Ramblers Association to deliver 2 events in summer 2013 and continue to develop off-road routes suitable for use by motorised Trampers and mobility scooters;
- Provide training and support to the 'Walks to Wellbeing' programme enabling 15 walk events within the National Park, and;
- Support the delivery of 40 volunteer events attracting 200 participants.

**Marketing, website and social media –**

- n) Redesign and add new content to the Authority's website for a June 2014 re-launch with a focus on the visitor offer.

**Targets:**

- Develop geographic area specific information for a range of visitors including those stopping for less than half a day;
- Increase the number of car parks with wifi access and location specific web information, and;
- Use the web and social media to promote private, public and voluntary sectors events in the National Park each week including NNPA Voluntary Ranger led events.

- o) Enhance the National Park and Authority's digital media presence (Web, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) with a particular focus for young people.

**Targets:**

- o Create a new section on the website aimed at young people with a focus on career pathways and enjoying the National Park;
- o Update the 'learning zone' and create on-line games such as species identifier, and;
- o Use social media and new media to build up support for the key youth engagement programmes like career pathways and for recruitment of young volunteers.

**The work programme for 'A Welcoming Park' is designed to deliver our 3 year Business Plan targets for 2016 which are:**

- 'The Sill' centre will open in 2016 attracting over 80,000 visitors each year.
- Between 2013 and 2016 we will deliver 2,000 days per annum of volunteering and careership participation.
- 30 Young Champions will have been recruited and trained. Collectively these champions will have engaged a further 1,200 young people.
- 4,700 engagement days in events via 'The Sill' project by 2016.
- Visitor numbers and spend to the National Park will increase by 6% by 2016 (1.36m visitors and £62.3m in 2012).

## 2. A Distinctive Place

*'Our aim is to manage, conserve and enhance the distinctive natural and cultural qualities of the National Park'*

### Policy Framework –

- a) Develop policy for the National Park and ensure key partner policies reflect the interests of the National Park.

#### Targets:

- Commence the five year review of the National Park Management Plan to ensure a strong and revised plan is published covering the period 2015-2020 (see Aim 5 for details);
- Adopt a vision for the Natural Environment of the National Park by December 2013;
- Adopt a Landscape Strategy for the National Park by March 2014;
- Adopt planning guidance on 'Lighting Management' to minimise light pollution from new developments;
- Work with Natural England to help inform the revision of the National Character Area Profiles covering the National Park and ensure synergy with the Landscape Strategy, and;
- Contribute to the pre-submission consultation for the Northumberland Local Development Plan Core Strategy scheduled for autumn 2013 to ensure National Park interests are appropriately safeguarded.

### Protect and enhance the natural environment and landscape –

- b) Undertake landscape protection and improvement projects.

#### Targets:

- Work with local communities to secure International Dark Sky Reserve accreditation for the National Park coordinating our work with the neighbouring bid by the Kielder Water and Forest Park;
  - Support residents with advice and funding to improve existing lighting installations identified via the audit in 2012 to ensure that our dark skies are enhanced;
  - Undertake a landscape visual impact assessment for all high voltage (20kv) overhead electricity lines in the National Park and work with Northern Powergrid to prioritise these for undergrounding;
  - Work with Northern Powergrid to underground a further 1,000 meters of existing overhead electricity cable in the National Park by March 2014;
  - Continue to monitor the rights of way network by motorised vehicles and monitor other issues (such as fly tipping), and;
  - Develop management techniques through the NNPA and Northumbria Police Land Managers Liaison Group to minimise damage on sensitive routes and sites and embed a Park wide approach (formerly northern focus).
- c) Carry out at least 5 actions towards the Biodiversity Action Plan using the learning from the Border Uplands project to help target activity.

#### Targets:

- Plan and deliver a heather moorland restoration project at 1 site (re-seeding heather);
- Work with volunteers to remove conifers from mires at Pundershaw and Chartners;

- Deliver a programme of collaborative burning in partnership with Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service on Lilburn Estates and farms in the North Tyne and Rede (subject to weather conditions during the burning season);
  - Engage 10 volunteers to survey 20 'Section 39' woodland sites, complete 5 management statements and undertake maintenance work at 5 sites;
  - Work with volunteers to remove invasive Rhododendron at Bonnyrigg to improve the habitat and protect the neighbouring National Nature Reserve;
  - Complete the planting of a network of goat willow habitat around Simonside in Harwood forest to provide early nectar sources and improve habitat connectivity for bumblebees and other pollinating insects;
  - Survey 20 hay meadows and add seed/plants to at least 5 fields;
  - Develop staff waxcap survey skills to enable ongoing monitoring and complete a waxcap survey to establish whether the National Park populations are of national importance;
  - Carry out surveys using volunteers to assess Curlew and Ring Ouzel numbers and identify wader hotspots – survey at least 15 Ring Ouzel sites and undertake Curlew surveys every 10km<sup>2</sup>;
  - Deliver a goat management plan and census of goats on the Otterburn Ranges and continue to implement a management plan for goats in the Northern Cheviots, and;
  - Following adoption of the Natural Environment Vision, revise and simplify Habitat and Species action plans.
- d) Through the Border Uplands partnership implement a programme of works/projects that will improve the robustness of ecological networks in line with the Making Space for Nature report and the Natural Environment White Paper.

**Targets:**

- Share the habitat mapping information and potential projects schedule produced by the project internally and externally to help to target future activity with land managers, and;
  - Approach land managers with proposals for moorland restoration and woodland planting schemes.
- e) Work with the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) to identify opportunities for linking habitats within the National Park and areas beyond the National Park boundary through habitat restoration and creation (e.g. Peatlands Project across the LNP area).

**Targets:**

- Map tree cover for the LNP area to identify priority sites for planting (see section 3c below);
- Map areas of High Nature Value Farming;
- Prioritise actions to safeguard or develop appropriate land management;
- Continue to prioritise habitat restoration to support Black Grouse populations, improving connectivity between the North Pennine and Scottish populations, and;
- Work with the North Cheviot Black Grouse Group to co-ordinate surveys and identify habitat enhancement opportunities.

**Protect and enhance the historic environment –**

- f) Develop a programme of work to safeguard and improve historic and important vernacular buildings.

**Targets:**

- Following the review of Listed Buildings in 2012, develop proposals to remove 5 Listed Buildings from the 'at risk' register and propose 5 undesignated buildings for listing.
- Working with owners of Listed Buildings, identify funding sources to enable conservation and maintenance of a further 3 priority buildings and structures.

g) Ensure the legacy of the Heritage at Risk project.

**Targets:**

- Support the transfer of the co-ordination of the condition survey programme to the volunteer steering group;
- Produce a project evaluation report (including project outcomes and how the legacy arrangements will be managed on an ongoing basis) by Sept 2013;
- Support volunteers to deliver the programme of condition surveys to assess a further 50 scheduled monuments, and;
- Carry out practical conservation works to reduce the risks to 5 priority scheduled monuments; secure landowner consents; assess the effectiveness of previous conservation work, and; update the project website and national datasets with information.

h) Ensure Authority owned and managed historic sites are maintained and enhanced.

**Targets:**

- Develop a maintenance work specification for the Authority managed 'High Rochester Roman Fort' by March 2014 to support a funding bid for works the following year, and;
- Ensure the cycle of Quinquennial reviews for properties under lease and/or management agreements is up to date.

i) Support a bursary placement to deliver a 1 year Community Archaeology project in the National Park linked to the North Pennines AONB's *Altogether Archaeology* project.

**Targets:**

- Establish the "Tynedale NoW" community archaeology group in the south of the National Park;
- Establish the joint *North Pennines and Northumberland Upland* Young Archaeologist Club (YAC) with the North Pennines AONB, and;
- Deliver a programme of practical research and engagement activities, including 2 field based projects and 6 education/engagement activities.

j) Provide support and advice to encourage historic and cultural events.

**Targets:**

- Provide ongoing advice and support to the newly formed community group, Tynedale NoW and jointly deliver 6 YAC events with the North Pennines AONB;
- Continue to provide advice and support to existing community archaeology groups including Coquetdale Community Archaeology, Northumberland Archaeological Group and the Cross Border Archaeological Project;
- Support 20 park-wide local events and shows through attendance / funding, including agricultural shows, community events, cultural festivals and activity events delivered by partners and local communities, and;

- As part of the Festival of the North East support a series of traditional music sessions in pubs in and around the Park throughout June 2013 (a project to be funded by AA grant in collaboration with Kathryn Tickell, sessions likely to be in Wark, Greenhaugh, Alwinton and Rothbury).

**The work programme for 'A Distinctive Place' is designed to deliver our 3 year Business Plan targets for 2016 which are:**

- Northumberland National Park will continue to be the most tranquil part of England. The National Park will be designated as a 'Dark Sky Reserve' in 2013.
- 100% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) maintained in 'favourable/improving' condition and move the area in 'favourable' condition to 45% by 2016 (from 29% in 2012).
- Percentage of scheduled monuments 'at risk' reduced to 35% by 2016 (from 50% in 2012).

### 3. A Living Working Landscape for Now and The Future

*'We will help the National Park adapt to change by applying new approaches, together with traditional techniques'*

#### Sustainable land management for priority habitats –

- a) Work with land managers and Natural England to target agri-environment schemes to manage priority habitats.

#### Targets:

- Deliver 14 new HLS agreements for farms that meet HLS targeting criteria and NNPA priorities to maximise the opportunities to safeguard and enhance the special qualities of the National Park;
- Offer all farms in the National Park the opportunity to enter ELS where they do not meet the HLS criteria;
- Assist Natural England to implement a monitoring framework for Higher Level Stewardship to assess the success of positive management on sites in the National Park and negotiate and agree any amendments required (approx 20% HLS customers in the NP visited per annum), and;
- Work with the College Valley Estate to fund and manage a project to track livestock (using GPS) introduced to Cheviot Massif.

#### High quality watercourses –

- b) Work with the Environment Agency, Natural England, and rivers trusts to undertake works in river catchments to improve water quality.

#### Targets:

- Undertake the Haltwhistle Burn catchment project looking at flood management and diffuse pollution;
- Work with the Environment Agency to develop deliverable projects to improve the status of the 3 Roman Wall Loughs;
- Work with the Environment Agency to ensure that delivery projects focussing on improving the status of the 3 Roman Wall Loughs include educational elements on sustainable land management and are linked to 'The Sill' HLF bid. Educational activity to be delivered prior to submission of the Stage 2 bid to HLF as an example of what can be achieved, and;
- Work with Catchment Sensitive Farming Project Officers to further develop and deliver a project to protect and enhance the water quality of rivers in the National Park by preventing sediment pollution associated with erosion from tracks and paths. Complete the Cheviot Hill Track Project, focussing on research and development of hill track management methodologies.

#### Woodland –

- c) Facilitate woodland mapping and planting, and develop proposals for local woodfuel initiatives.

#### Targets:

- Map information on tree cover across the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership area to establish a current baseline and add value to the Forestry Commission's National Forest Inventory ensuring up-to-date information is used in

decision making. Using this data undertake an opportunities and constraints mapping exercise for partners to identify priority sites for new native woodland planting across the LNP;

- Approach landowners to propose areas for new native woodland planting (using habitat improvement/connectivity information from the Border Uplands and LNP projects) and assist in the development of EWGS applications, and;
- Work with land managers and key partners to pilot locally-focused woodfuel initiatives.

### **Sustainable development and climate change –**

- d) Continue to implement the Cheviot Futures initiative to test innovative adaptation / resilience measures to effects and impacts of climate change on the land management community.

#### **Targets:**

- Trial a wildfire automatic detection system and wildfire control tests;
- Develop learning materials and deliver of a learning conference to share knowledge gained from pilot projects (e.g. flood and erosion mitigation techniques, etc), and;
- Investigate a sustainable long-term model for the project including looking at the funding arrangement with partners.

- e) Continue to provide expertise for climate change mitigation and adaption initiatives.

#### **Targets:**

- Continue to support businesses and communities with energy reduction and renewable energy initiatives, including providing match funding where appropriate;
- Continue to support farms in the Cheviots to deliver the Upper Coquet micro-hydro project, and;
- Share the expertise and experience of the Authority in developing responses to carbon reduction initiatives and climate change adaptation to encourage wider uptake within the National Park and beyond.

### **The work programme for ‘A Living Working Landscape’ is designed to deliver our 3 year Business Plan targets for 2016 which are:**

- **84,500** ha of the National Park including 94% of priority habitats under positive management in (higher level) agri-environment schemes by 2016 (62,500 ha and 85% priority habitats in 2013).
- 65% of the length of watercourses in ‘good’ or ‘high’ condition by 2016 (59% in 2012).
- 350ha of New Native Woodland planted and 500ha of plantation re-profiled or removed between 2013 and 2016.

## 4. Thriving Communities

*'We will contribute to the thriving and vibrant communities which have a strong sense of place and an economy grounded in the natural and cultural qualities of the National Park'*

### Community engagement –

- a) Clearly communicate with local communities and provide mechanisms to ensure communities are central in shaping the future of the National Park.

#### Targets:

- Hold a National Park Forum in October 2013 focussed on youth engagement to engage residents and other stakeholders and provide the opportunity for them to influence future National Park policies and programmes;
- Development of new area based forums within the National Park by December 2012, and;
- Engage a minimum of 4 independent members to scrutinise the work of the Authority.

### Rural development –

- b) Continue to host the Northumberland Uplands Leader.

#### Targets:

- Continue to support and fund rural development projects;
- Complete a review of NULAG's delivery of the current Local Development Strategy;
- Develop a new Local Development Strategy;
- Work with Defra to agree transitional funding arrangements for 'on the ground' delivery for the period between funding rounds, and;
- Build capacity amongst the Local Action Group.

- c) Undertake a review of the benefits to rural development from the Authority's local area based approach (area funds and SDF activity).

#### Targets:

- Commission and complete a review by February 2014, and;
- Implement effective mechanisms for providing future support and grant aid including looking at loan and profit share arrangements.

- d) If the Rural Growth Fund Bid for the creation of enterprise hubs in the rural areas of the North East is successful support the creation of a cluster of new live-work units in the North Tyne.

### Support for local communities and business –

- e) Support communities through our area based staff teams.

#### Targets:

- Support communities through Action Area working by directing community groups to potential funding sources, sharing best practice and providing advice and guidance;
- Provide 40 community grants, and 5 other grants;

- Continue to seek funding and develop existing projects to provide high speed broad band within the National Park and gateway settlements. Roll out of Defra funded programme in North Tyne / Redesdale, and Coquetdale, and;
  - Continue to support communities with energy reduction and renewable energy initiatives, including providing match funding where appropriate.
- f) Support businesses through our area based staff teams.

**Targets:**

- Support and advise 20 new and existing businesses and look to provide 15 business grants through our Action Area funds, SDF and Leader schemes;
- Encourage 10 new and existing businesses to develop/promote nature based tourism, including dark sky tourism events/activities;
- Support and market appropriate partner events (e.g. Bellingham Blast, Northern Rock Cyclone) and support the Outdoor Northumberland network;

**Positive planning service –**

- g) Continue to operate a planning service which positively enables sustainable development.

**Targets:**

- Support the communities in the North Tyne to develop a neighbourhood plan with wide community and stakeholder engagement and support from the County Council and other statutory consultees such as English Heritage and Natural England;
- Re-establish regular 'Planning Surgeries' throughout the National Park following the successful 2012 pilot to increase involvement and understanding in planning decisions;
- Review the effectiveness of housing policies and the approach to bringing local and affordable housing forward, and;
- Continue to undertake an annual local facilities survey with the results informing ongoing review of the sustainability and needs of National Park settlements.

**The work programme for 'Thriving Communities' is designed to deliver our 3 year Business Plan targets for 2016 which are:**

- 50% of National Park residents agree that the Authority listens and responds to residents opinions (from 27% in 2011).
- By 2016, 95% of businesses and households within the National Park are able to access affordable broadband and speeds of at least 12Mb download.
- Economic activity rate of 75% in the National Park is maintained.
- The age profile of National Park residents indicates a decrease in outward migration of young people and adults of working age.

## 5. A Valued Asset

*'We will help ensure the National Park is valued as a local, regional and national asset, with influence beyond its boundaries, that is worth looking after now and for generations to come'*

### Communicate the value of the National Park to policy and decision makers –

- a) Promote the value of the National Park.

#### Targets:

- Contribute to the English National Park Authorities Association economic study of National Parks and share the economic value of NNP with key policy makers, including the North East LEP. Propose a similar study into the value of eco-systems services within National Parks for 2014/15;
- Use the methodology developed for mapping eco-systems services by the Border Uplands project to expand the information for the entire National Park area. Share the eco-systems services information produced, and;
- Contribute to the Farming and Rural Advisory Network to influence policy development and delivery of programmes of Defra and the North East LEP.

### Communicate the wider benefits of landscape scale partnership initiatives –

- b) Contribute to the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership with the North Pennines AONB, Nidderdale AONB and the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

#### Targets:

- Share information and develop joint initiatives (e.g. Peatlands project).

### Focused advocacy and partnership working –

- c) Commence the five year review of the National Park Management Plan to review the key issues facing the Park and re-establish a long term partnership Vision for its future, underpinned with policies, targets and actions for the National Park Authority and our key partners.

#### Targets:

- Undertake meaningful engagement to maximize feedback from interested groups and individuals on key issues facing the Park and how to tackle them;
  - Agree scope and scale of review by December 2013;
  - Begin public consultation on key issues and a long term vision by March 2014;
  - Begin work with key partners to refine vision, identify priorities and develop detailed actions to achieve them by March 2014;
  - Detailed consultation on draft Management Plan in 2014/15, and;
  - Ensure a timetable is in place to publish a strong Management Plan for 2015-20 to guide the delivery of the National Park purposes and socio-economic duty during that period, by the end of 2014.
  
- d) Ensure our partnership working is focused on our priorities of land management, rural development, youth engagement, and delivering 'The Sill'.

#### Targets:

- Ensure the opportunities identified through the development phase of 'The Sill' are shared with partners (and built into the next management plan)
- Further develop the successful partnership working between the Authority and Natural England in delivering Higher Level Stewardship by delivering a monitoring framework to monitor the outcomes of HLS

**The work programme for 'A Valued Asset' is designed to deliver our 3 year Business Plan targets for 2016 which are:**

- Enhanced awareness of the value of the National Park to the region and the nation.
- The County Council Local Development Framework recognises the role of gateway towns and the impact of significant development outside the National Park.
- Management Plan partners are actively delivering the aims of the Northumberland National Park Management Plan.
- National policy development continues to recognise the policy implications for National Parks, including the needs of upland and deep rural communities.

## 6. An Excellent Organisation

*'We will be an efficient, effective and inclusive organisation achieving through partnerships and will strive for excellence'*

### Invest in our staff and volunteers –

- a) Invest in training and development to improve staff skills and capacity.

#### Targets:

- Simplify the staff appraisal process and include stronger linkages to the Corporate Plan to enable all staff to better understand their role;
- Increase investment in training by 33% p.a. for a fixed three year period and prioritise training and development to improve levels of professionalism and improve skills in areas including: social/new media; project management and procurement; corporate communications, and; commercial approach, and;
- Start an approach to support staff in becoming more enterprising in terms of valuing their work and generating income.

- b) Ensure effective arrangements are embedded for members and managers to support staff to deliver.

#### Targets:

- Set actions including training and development and assessment of managerial capacity to provide high levels of peer support for staff, and;
- Ensure that the non-executive team i.e. members of the board have protocols and operate clear practices to and from staff which actively support the executive arm of the Authority.

- c) Maintain Investors in People status and achieve staff survey scores and staff attendance rates in the top 25% nationally.

#### Targets:

- Complete our Investors in People assessment, and;
- Carry out the HSE staff survey and benchmark results and share learning lessons with staff and Members.
  - Maintain results in the top 25% nationally for 'Peer Support'
  - Aim for top 25% for 'Demands' by 2014
  - Aim for top 50% for 'Role' by 2016

### Income generation –

- d) Broaden the Authority's income base from more commercial activities.

#### Targets:

- Set an income generation strategy by 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013 to generate £139,000 of additional ongoing income by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016;
- Establish a business hub at Eastburn to generate additional rental income;
- Develop and train staff to be more commercially aware, and;
- Develop systems to be able to achieve full cost recovery from partnership working.

### Environmental footprint –

- e) Complete actions to further improve the Authority's environmental performance.

#### Targets:

- o Provide and promote a fuel efficient vehicle fleet and ensure adequate availability of pool cars;
- o Invest in further energy saving technology at the Authority's Head Office (following review of Estates);
- o Arrange Authority meetings to minimise travel requirements of Members;
- o Expand video and phone conferencing to the Rothbury office, and;
- o Undertake selective monitoring and performance management of environmental improvement initiatives.

### Streamlined governance –

- f) Reduce the number of members from 22 to 18 by April 2014 and ensure all our local communities and stakeholders are served by good two-way communications to and from our Members.

#### Targets:

- o Assist Northumberland Association of Local Councils in their selection process for National Park Parish appointments;
- o Run a comprehensive member induction programme;
- o Co-opt three external review members;
- o Continually develop members on technical issues such as planning any other areas where quasi judicial decisions are taken;
- o Ensure adherence to the Member Code of Conduct, and;
- o Develop area based forums.

### Effective communication –

- g) Maximise the benefits from new technologies and social media to ensure that our communication is more efficient and effective.

#### Targets:

- o Make significant headway to refocus the website to be visitor facing and able to generate significant income without incur additional ongoing costs. Aim for completion by June 2014.
- h) Ensure the communication infrastructure and training is appropriate to support members and staff to communicate effectively.

#### Targets:

- o Provide tailored options for members to improve their communications;
- o Start the replacement of the current customer relationship management system with a lower cost suite of solutions to meet our breadth of needs. Ensure accurate and relevant data is extracted and used;
- o Invest in an improved infrastructure to include a hardware replacement programme, improve broadband services to all key sites, and more integrated and effective telecoms and mobile communications.

- i) Ensure that all residents receive accurate, timely and helpful information describing the work of the Authority, our plans, performance and the successes of local communities and businesses in helping us make the National Park a better place to live, work and visit.

**Targets:**

- Provide low cost quarterly printed residents newsletters to all residents linked to our performance, Annual Forum, plans of action and to seek views and information from our residents;
- Consider and implement the relevant elements of the review of corporate communications;
- Set a social media strategy to drive forward improvements to the visitor facing part of the website and enhance corporate communications;
- Set and actively implement rolling monthly corporate communications action plan to focus on key messages of the Authority's work in terms of land management, rural development, youth engagement, and the Sill;
- Ensure each month has a corporate communication theme and at least once a month a locally tailored rural development message is communicated in the local print media;
- Ensure all key corporate messages are supported with professional photography;
- Use social media to support corporate communications and raise Twitter followers by 100% from just under 2,000 (in 2013) to 4,000 by 2016;
- Develop more electronic means of communicating more effectively with partners, businesses and communicates of interest beyond the national park boundary, and;
- Refocus all communications – social media, electronic and printed – to ensure that the Authority's website has primacy.

**Effective and value for money –**

- j) Ensure the Authority continue to deliver effective and value for money services.

**Targets:**

- Set a balanced 3 year budget and maintain annual budget spend within 5% of planned budgets via active monitoring and reporting;
- Update the Strategic Risk register to be better aligned to the issues inherent within the 3 year business plan and regularly monitor and manage the strategic risks;
- Receive high level of assurance on 75% of audits and close-out all significant audit findings within 12 months;
- Improve project management by staff training and development;
- Ensure the Estate Management Strategy is signed-off by the Authority;
- Review the physical Estate regarding its effective use of resources;
- Regular and clear communication regarding the use of our funds to support businesses and communities;
- Ensure the design of all out customer facing information is clear and demonstrates the offer at all of our sites to enable the public to make best use of our sites and facilities.

- k) Ensure the Authority's role as Local Planning Authority is exercised efficiently and effectively.

**Targets:**

- Undertake an end to end review of protocols and procedures pertaining to statutory functions to ensure they are fit for purpose in respect of updated national legislation and policy, current resource levels, and customer expectations;
- Refresh and re-launch the Authority's policy on charging for pre-application advice and ensure the policy is monitored and implemented in all cases;
- Update website pages on all stages of the development management process to ensure customers can navigate the system as straightforwardly as possible: to include seeking pre-application advice, submitting an application, amending an application, discharging conditions and making changes to an extant permission;
- Prepare and consult upon a new set of local information requirements for planning applications, which is proportionate and which identifies the information which will be relevant, necessary and material to decision making;
- Review monitoring and compliance protocol with an up to date local enforcement plan to manage enforcement proactively in a way that is appropriate to the National Park, setting out how the implementation of planning permissions be monitored, how alleged cases of unauthorised development will be investigated, and how action will be taken where appropriate.

**The work programme for 'An Excellent Organisation' is designed to deliver our 3 year Business Plan targets for 2016 which are to:**

- Maintain our Investors in People award and staff satisfaction to benchmark in the top 25% nationally (Health and Safety Executive survey) in three priority areas.
- Increase the number of annual volunteer days by 25% to 1,850 by 2016 (from 1,480 in 2012).
- Generate £139,000 of new sources of income.