



Corporate Plan

2015 - 2016

The Corporate Plan identifies the performance of the Authority in the previous year and sets the priorities for the current year 2015/16.

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

June 2015

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.

Contents

	Page
Section 1 Executive Summary	1
Organisational Change	1
Budgets	1
Governance	1
Medium Term Business Plan	2
Risk Management	2
Our Performance – Delivery Against Plan in 2014/15	3
Performance Indicators	4
Our Forward Work Programme – 2015/16 Priority Actions	5
Section 2 Delivering the Vision – Our Previous Year’s Performance (2014/15)	6
Aim 1 A Welcoming Park	6
Aim 2 A Distinctive Place	10
Aim 3 A Living, Working Landscape for Now and for the Future	13
Aim 4 Thriving Communities	16
Aim 5 A Valued Asset	18
Aim 6 An Excellent Organisation	19
Section 3 Delivering the Vision – Forward Work Programme (2015/16)	22
Aim 1 A Welcoming Park	22
Aim 2 A Distinctive Place	28
Aim 3 A Living, Working Landscape for Now and for the Future	31
Aim 4 Thriving Communities	34
Aim 5 A Valued Asset	37
Aim 6 An Excellent Organisation	38

Section 1. Executive Summary

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 following four financial years. Last year (2014/15) was the final year of the budget reduction process and the Authority has achieved a balanced budget through embedding significant staff and budget cuts and by progressing income generation initiatives.

The National Park Authority now employs 49 full-time equivalent staff posts, a 40% reduction from the 82 posts in 2010. Prioritising our work and managing the expectations of our partners, communities and service users has been a difficult but necessary process following such a reduction in resources. The Authority has had to work differently to achieve its goals and adopt a greater commercial focus to sustain itself. After a number of difficult years where the Authority has had to readjust to match its ambitions to its resources, the performance over the last year indicates the organisation is now finding its balance. The Authority has demonstrated that it can deliver ambitious projects and first class performance in its priority work areas with very limited resources. With uncertain times ahead, the Authority's ability to maintain this level of performance could be placed in doubt, with any further reduction in resources likely to lead to a disproportionately greater impact on delivery of our work programme.

Budgets

As a result of front-loading budget cuts and achieving its commercial income generation targets the Authority has been able to set balanced budgets over the four year budget reduction period whilst maintaining healthy balances. This has enabled the Authority to fund earmarked projects including the 'Sill National Landscape Discovery Centre' project.

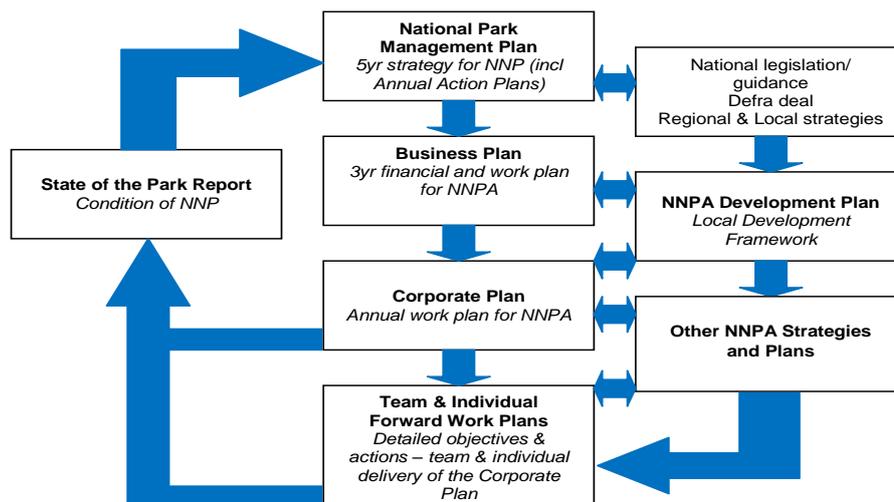
Governance

In 2013 the governance of the Authority was streamlined with the number of Members reducing from 22 to 18 with equal representation of national, county and parish interests. In the last year the Authority rationalised membership of its committees and established a number of 'working' and 'task and finish' groups to ensure it maintains effective and efficient governance.

Medium Term Business Plan

The Authority adopted a three-year Business Plan in March 2013 setting out its priorities and investment strategy through to 2016. The Business Plan guides the development of our annual work programme which is contained within this Corporate Plan. This document reports performance against the second year of the Business Plan (section 2), and sets out the programme for the final year of the Business Plan period (section 3).

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.



Risk Management

The Strategic Risk Register defines the key risks to the delivery of the Authority's three-year Business Plan and is reviewed regularly. The register contains nine risks and the measures we will implement to mitigate against them. After mitigation one risk remains in the highest "primary risk" category, namely "20% or more loss of core Defra funding over the next three years". This risk has been upgraded as the external political environment indicates further reductions and Defra is an unprotected government department.

Our Performance – Delivery Against Plan in 2014/15

In 2014/15 our performance against actions in our work programme showed a marked improvement over the results for the last three years and was approaching pre budget reduction levels albeit against a much reduced work programme. We achieved or substantially achieved 70% of actions (50%, 60%, and 52% in the previous three years) and partially achieved 22% (33%, 18%, and 34% previous three years). Only 8% of actions were not achieved (17%, 22%, 14% previous three years).

	Status of 2014/15 actions			
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	
Aim 1	12	2	0	
Aim 2	7	5	1	
Aim 3	6	1	0	
Aim 4	5	1	2	
Aim 5	4	0	1	
Aim 6	7	4	1	
Total	41	13	5	59
Total as a %	70%	22%	8%	100%

The Authority should not be complacent about this improved result as this was achieved against a backdrop of low staff turnover and incredibly low sickness levels in the last year and there is a general feeling that staff have ‘worked flat out’. There is virtually no contingency if staff are unavailable for any reason as demonstrated by a number of the ‘not achieved’ actions which relate to policy development work where there were no staff resources for most of the year.

We performed strongly in:

- Completing the project development stage of the Sill project, gaining planning permission, scheduled monument consent, and £7.8m of Heritage Lottery Funding.
- Engagement with young people through initiatives such as the Curlew Club, Young Archaeologists Club, and through the Youth Mosaic project.
- Successfully transferring the management of Hadrian’s Wall National Trail to the Authority from Hadrian’s Wall Heritage Limited and reinvigorated the national trail partnership.
- Developing a new destination led National Park website.
- Acting as applicant and accountable body for the £700,000 “Hadrian’s Cavalry” project, supporting a new initiative for museums along Hadrian’s Wall.
- Completing and launching a new vision for the natural environment for the National Park (launched by (then) Defra Minister, Lord de Mauley, in June 2014).
- Facilitating restoration of priority moorland habitats through the Border Uplands initiative and Environmental Stewardship Scheme agreements, for example securing funding and organising work to block over 6,800 metres of moorland grips to restore 140 hectares of bog and heath in the Simonside area.
- Leading habitat mapping across the Northern Uplands Chain Local Nature Partnership area.
- Positively influencing the design and priorities for the new national agri-environment scheme (Countryside Stewardship) to help facilitate implementation in the National Park.
- Working in partnership with Northumberland County Council to retain the AD122 Hadrian’s Wall Bus service (reduced service) when loss of funding threatened its continued existence.
- Supporting the sustainability of tourism businesses through involvement in the ‘Animating Dark Skies’ and ‘Sandstone Way Mountain Bike Trail’ projects. We supported business training allowing them to capitalise on these high profile ‘out of season’ and sustainable tourism projects.

- Supporting the development of a new Local Development Strategy for the Northumberland Uplands which led to a successful bid for future Leader funding.
- Completing the development of the Eastburn Enterprise Hub project achieving 100% occupancy of office Pods in the first year.
- Developing “The Sill” as a regionally significant project, engaging partners from across the region and all sectors.
- Establishing the Northumberland National Park Foundation as a valuable means by which wider society can support the Northumberland National Park as a valued asset of the region.
- Completing a review and refresh of the Authority’s volunteer service, making a move towards a more modern and task based volunteer service.
- Completing a review of the Authority’s planning service and establishing new development management and forward planning teams, whilst maintaining development management performance targets.
- Implementing a new continuous appraisal system for staff and achieving low levels of staff turnover (12.5%) and sickness levels well below the public sector average at 2.63 days per employee per year.
- Commercial income generation continuing to move forward with year 2 target largely achieved (to within £1,000) and the cumulative target to date over achieved.

We did not perform well by:

- Not progressing the review of the Northumberland National Park Management Plan.
- Not progressing the review of the Local Plan (core strategy) and development policies.
- Not progressing work on housing needs within the National Park.
- Not preparing a funding bid to remove the High Rochester Roman Fort from ‘at risk’.

Performance Indicators

Our performance in 2014/15 against our 46 headline indicators showed that 20 were considered ‘good’ 17 ‘acceptable’ and 5 ‘poor’ whilst a further 4 were not available for publication as they were not due for collection or data was unavailable. The assessment is made taking into account longer term trends and benchmark information where it is available. Overall, ‘good’ performance outweighs ‘poor’ performance by a ratio of 4:1.

Performance Indicators - Assessment		
Good Performance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	20
Acceptable Performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	17
Poor Performance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5
Not available for publication*		4
*Not due for publication or data unavailable		46

Several of the key ‘poor’ performance indicators are associated with: reducing website users, where we are unable to determine whether this is a genuine decline due to changed methods of data capture, and; reduced usability on rights of way, although our priority routes have been maintained. The ‘acceptable’ performance indicators include the reducing numbers and value of business and community grants which have resulted from the Authority’s review of rural development programmes. Whilst the number and value of projects have reduced, match funding ratios have improved.

Our Forward Work Programme – 2015/16 Priority Actions

This Corporate Plan again attempts to set realistic targets with a number of Business Plan targets not making it into the final work programme (e.g. Landscape Strategy and Housesteads car park extension being removed). However the forward work programme remains ambitious given the Authority's limited resources and capacity to respond to events. It is also recognised that 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 National Landscape Discovery Centre.

Northumberland National Park Authority is committed to focussing on those areas where it can best deliver its priority areas of work.

In 2015/16 we aim to:

- Prioritise policy work by completing a 'light touch' review of the National Park Management Plan and initiating a review of the Local Plan;
- Maintain our focus on land management by raising awareness amongst land managers of the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme and helping to target the new scheme within the National Park;
- Continue to work on a landscape scale through the Local Nature Partnership (LNP);
- Embed the Authority's revised structures for Rural Development with a change in emphasis from grant giving to accessing and attracting external funding to business and community projects;
- Continue to engage young people by providing career pathways opportunities, hosting the final year of Youth Mosaic project, and establishing a youth cabinet to inform governance of the Authority;
- Enhance the focus on staff development and implement new structures and systems for working with volunteers;
- Continue to focus on commercial income generation and fundraising initiatives, including expansion of Hexham Enterprise Hub, developing new income generation initiatives and supporting giving through the Northumberland National Park Foundation and other sources.
- Establish interim visitor centre and operational staff arrangements at Walltown in advance of the Sill development starting at Once Brewed;
- Move into the construction phase of the Sill project, closing the match funding gap, awarding construction contracts and beginning the demolition of the existing building;
- Start the delivery of the Sill Activity Programme, developing new content and partnerships to establish the Education, Events, and Training programmes. Translating existing engagement activities to fit with the Sill Activity Programme (e.g. Dark Skies / Volunteer guided walks, etc).

The work programme for the year ahead is challenging as the Authority takes on a major national project in addition to its existing core work.

Tony Gates - Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

June 2015

Section 2. Delivering the Vision – Our Previous Year’s Performance (2014/15)

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 –

Awarded £7.8m Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) for the ‘Sill National Landscape Discovery Centre’ – The Authority led a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) working with its principle partner the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) and a team of external consultants to complete the development phase of the project. Significant work was completed in the year including: trialling the activity programme with an international wildfire event proving particularly successful; gaining planning permission for the development in September; securing match funding arrangements, and; submitting the HLF bid in October and final report in November 2014. All of this work culminated in the HLF awarding £7.8m to the project in February 2015.

Youth engagement –

Engaging through education – In developing the Education Programme for the Sill we trialled Art Award, Walking Books, and Moorland Indicators of Climate Change Initiative (MICCI) programmes with local and regional schools. With support from our volunteers we worked with 10 schools to develop 5 ‘walking book’ routes although final publication didn’t happen in the year as planned. Again with the support of volunteers we delivered MICCI activities to 5 classes (approx. 125 pupils) from 3 schools.

We developed and delivered 7 sessions of an out of school ‘Curlew Club’ reaching over 70 children and with some sessions engaging whole families. We also established a Young Archaeologists Club (YAC) (see Aim 2 for details).

Training and career pathways for young people – The Ranger Team hosted 4 ‘Young Volunteer Ranger’ placements in the year and employed a young person on a three month bursary within the team. Three of the five individuals have continued with the Authority gaining further experience through the Volunteer Service. A number of short term work experience placements were also provided with four young people gaining John Muir Explorer Awards and one gaining a Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. Several careers fairs were supported in the year leading to a young volunteer taster day held in March 2015 attended by 45 young people. We engaged a young person on a three month work shadow in our Human Resources department and hosted MSc dissertation placements and a Newcastle University short-term placement to conduct a wildlife recognition survey.

However, we haven’t provided 2 visitor management placements, developed a historic environment apprenticeship framework, or supported 6 young carers to gain the John Muir award as was originally planned.

Completed year 2 of the Mosaic Youth project – The Youth Mosaic project has 18 Young Champions who have introduced a further 72 young people (mainly from urban backgrounds) to the National Park. One of our Young Champions won the 2014 UK National Parks ‘Young Volunteer of the Year Award’.

Youth voice in governance – The Authority employed a young person as a ‘Youth Engagement Officer’ one day each week to pull together the legacy of previous youth engagement work (e.g. the ‘Young Northumberland’ project) and to create a network of young people and youth organisations. This work culminated in the appointment of a lead Authority Member for young people and the creation of a Youth Cabinet to ensure the voice of young people can influence the Authority’s governance. The inaugural meeting of the Youth Cabinet was held in March 2015 attended by 6 young people.

Visitor welcome and infrastructure –

Provision of high quality visitor facilities – The Authority run visitor centre at Once Brewed achieved a Bronze in the ‘Visitor Information’ category and was highly commended in the ‘Sustainable Tourism’ category of the North East Tourism Awards. The centre retained its Green Tourism Business Scheme Gold Award. We didn’t run a visitor centre survey this year so are unable to report whether we achieved our target of 90%+ for visitor satisfaction with the facilities. However, empowering the centre staff to change and manage the retail offer has resulted in a healthy 14% increase in sales in 2014/15, and a corresponding increase in visitor spend from 83p to 92p per person. Visitor numbers increased by 4% from 42,498 to 44,364 in the same period. Key factors to this success are a more appealing product range and the continued enthusiasm amongst staff to promote sales. Food and drink continue to dominate sales, and the introduction of the ‘bean-to-cup’ coffee machine with the smell of fresh ground coffee has made a positive impact.

The dual National Park and ‘Shepherd’s Walks’ branded visitor information service at Rothbury continued to provide a 7 days a week service throughout the year. The ‘Muddy Boots’ cafe operated out of the former Ingram visitor centre providing an important facility in the area. Unfortunately, the business decided to close in March, but a new business, the ‘Valley Cottage Cafe and Restaurant’ has taken on the lease from the end of May 2015 ensuring visitor facilities are in place for the main summer season.

Infrastructure and welcome facilities – A visitor survey was completed in 2014 providing a useful update on the previous 2011 survey. Visitors cite landscape, scenery and tranquillity as the Parks special qualities and walking remains the most popular activity. The proportion of overnight staying visitors increased on 2011 and this resulted in an increase in average spend. Online sources are increasingly important for pre-visit and especially for within-visit information and whilst generally people are happy with facilities, toilets and wifi coverage again fall short of expectation. Overall, 96% of visitors gave a 5 or 6 out of 6 score for enjoyment of their visit.

Fully costed plans and planning consent were gained for the redevelopment of the Bulby’s Wood toilets and information point in the year and the works are to be completed by the end of July 2015. Work to increase the size of the Housesteads car park was not progressed and is not included in the work plan for the year ahead as other site developments linked to the Sill project take priority.

Improvements and/or interpretation were added to 11 Dark Sky Discovery Sites around the National Park (Walltown, Cawfields, Once Brewed, Falstone, Stonehaugh, Tarsset, Elsdon, Alwinton, Rochester, Ingram, and Kirknewton).

Access Infrastructure – The Authority became lead partner on the Hadrian’s Wall Path National Trail Partnership taking on responsibility for the management of the entire coast to coast route. The Authority manages the staff and resources on behalf of the partnership ensuring a key piece of infrastructure for the National Park is well maintained. We also

managed the contract to install 300 metres of new flagged path on the Border Ridge at Houx Hill on the Pennine Way.

The Authority also worked in partnership to establish the long distance Sandstone Way Mountain Bike Trail between Berwick and Hexham. We removed obstructions and made surface improvements at Low Leam to enable that section to be included in the project. The route has been waymarked, infrastructure installed or promoted, and an official map and website produced. 20 businesses have received training to enable them to benefit from the route and are involved in a visitor payback scheme, and £2,000 in payback has been raised in the first three months through map sales.

Activities and events –

Accessible events – Our volunteers led a programme of 69 guided walks attracting 629 participants, providing guided access to the National Park to less confident visitors. We also worked with the Disabled Ramblers Association to develop a route in the north of the Park for an event that will now run in 2016. However, the ‘Walks for Wellbeing’ programme didn’t run last year as planned but is to be re-introduced for the year ahead.

A three day family orientated event on the theme of ‘Engaging the Younger Generation’ ran from Walltown for National Parks Week 2014. This provided the most comprehensive customer offer for National Parks Week yet, but a combination of late programme development, limited marketing, and poor weather across the three days meant that only 163 people attended against a target of 500 with a consequential impact on our income generation and cost recovery targets. Lessons have been learnt for the year ahead.

Approximately 1,500 children had the opportunity to engage with the National Park through the ‘Glendale Children’s Day’. However, targets for urban outreach activities and family focused events were not achieved with budget for the latter redirected to a Sill trial activity ‘Discover the Breamish Valley’ which attracted a disappointing 25 participants, again with consequential impacts on income generation and cost recovery targets. Again this has provided further learning for future activity programmes.

Vibrant public events – As part of the Dark Skies project the Authority ran a series of ‘Starmaker’ events across the National Park and a further 9 Dark Sky events from Once Brewed. A number of business training events engaging 16 people from 12 businesses were also held to develop the astro-tourism market. Dark skies were identified as a special quality of the National Park for the first time by 4% of visitors. The volunteer developed and managed ‘Kirknewton Archaeology Festival’ was held in August 2014 attracting around 300 participants over the weekend with support from and benefit to the local community.

As part of the development of the Sill activity programme an ‘International Wildfire Conference’ was held attracting participants from across Europe to share best practice in managing the risk of and fighting wildfires.

Varied volunteering opportunities – The Authority supported over 2,400 volunteer days in the year with 155 (6.5%) from young or under-represented people. Volunteering activities included: volunteer guided walks; natural and historic environment surveying; Hadrian’s Wall Path work; funding support for community volunteering projects and the Northumberland National Park Mountain Rescue Team, as well as the volunteer organised Kirknewton Festival, and youth volunteering initiatives such as the Young Volunteer Ranger Placements and Youth Cabinet. Volunteers contributed the equivalent of 9.5 additional staff with every £1 spent on volunteering returning £2.90 of value and over £250,000 of total value to the Authority.

Marketing, website and social media –

Marketing and Website – The Visitor Guide for 2015 has been produced and is available online with a further 40,000 copies printed and distributed to key locations and tourism providers. 25% cost recovery was achieved through advertising revenue with a target of 100% cost recovery for the current year.

A new visitor facing website was launched in March 2015. Whilst the site was launched later than planned, it has been well received with 'Web User' magazine rating the site 5 stars (out of 5). The new site is focused on places to go and things to do with a strong emphasis on the events calendar. It is fully integrated with social media channels and is designed to work on mobile phones and hand held devices. In its last twelve months of operation, the old website attracted 62,430 users (39,106 unique users) providing the benchmark from which to measure the impact of the new site.

Social media – The Authority continues to increase its social media presence with Facebook 'Likes' increasing by 56% from 2,083 to 3,254 and Twitter 'Followers' increasing by 53% from 5,235 to 8,000. Social media is increasingly being used to promote the events programme and interesting projects and initiatives and the Authority has established online links with a number of local residents and businesses.

A Welcoming Park – Performance Summary

Indicator Title	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Assm't
National Park Centre satisfaction-effectiveness survey score	90.58%	88.76%	78.00%	n/a	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↓ ¹
Website usage - unique users and user satisfaction					
a) Unique users (,000)	194	60	n/a	39	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↓ ²
b) % rating the website as 'very good' or 'excellent'	79.3%	81.9%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Social media presence					
a) Number of Facebook friends/likes	-	1,170	2,083	3,254	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
b) Number of Twitter followers	-	2,270	5,237	8,000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
Volunteer Days					
a) Number of volunteer days led by Northumberland National Park Authority	1,480	1,730	n/a	2,403	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
b) Number of those days attended by 'under represented' groups	158	236	n/a	155	<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
c) Total "value" of volunteering (£)	-	£173,000	n/a	£255,450	<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	73.90	65.60	69.70	71.30	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
b) % easy to use that follow the exact definitive line	73.90	65.60	69.70	54.60	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↓
c) % signposted where they leave the road	90.00	100.00	92.00	92.60	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑

Good Performance

Acceptable Performance

Poor Performance

↑ Improving Trend

= Static Trend

↓ Declining Trend

2. A Distinctive Place

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

Policy Framework –

Natural Environment Vision adopted – A new vision for the natural environment was adopted by the Authority in June 2014 and was officially launched by the (then) Defra Minister Lord de Mauley in August. However, work on other key policy documents such as the reviews of the National Park Management Plan and Local Plan were not progressed due to staff vacancies in this area.

Protect and enhance the natural environment and landscape –

Priority Habitat work – Priority habitats cover 31% of the National Park with the moorland habitats of blanket bog and upland heath representing nearly 30% (the other priority habitats of hay meadows, ancient woodland, and rivers and burns represent just under 1.5%). However, large areas are either fragmented or degraded and it is nationally recognised that these are the most difficult habitats to restore to favourable condition.

In the last year we worked with Lilburn Estate to begin the re-creation of 80 hectares of heath habitat on Snear Hill. We scoped and agreed the treatments for plots and undertook the baseline vegetation survey and will continue the monitoring work. We continued to work with Linhope Estate on heather restoration and facilitated a joint visit with both estates and Natural England to demonstrate seed harvesting and to review work completed to date. Through the Border Uplands project we surveyed and produced costed restoration plans for three moorland areas covering 7,000 hectares leading to a project on Simonside which restored 140 hectares of bog and heath habitats by blocking 6,815 metres of moorland grips and reprofiling work.

The Authority facilitated a new Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement containing extensive heathland and blanket bog restoration actions, and worked with contractors and volunteers at Pundershaw, Steng Moss, Rookan Flow, and Evistones to remove invasive species from these moorland sites. We reseeded Heather at 6 sites.

The Authority continued to improve native broadleaf woodland, securing HLS agreements at Hudspeth and Billsmoor Park to create over 20 hectares of wood pasture habitat and encourage native woodland regeneration (to be implemented this year). We continued to work with our volunteers to survey and maintain 'Section 39' woodland sites, and we worked with Hepple Whitefield farm on a local (disease free) juniper propagation project identifying planting areas and negotiating changes to the HLS agreement for protection of newly planted stock.

The headline condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) remained unchanged in the last year with 99% of the 12,452ha of SSSI in 'favourable' (29%) or 'recovering' (70%) condition. There was a small improvement with approximately 100ha moving into 'favourable' condition and it should be noted that Northumberland benchmarks well to the average for all English National Parks (25%) and particularly against other upland parks with similar habitats (21%).

Priority Species work – Loss of habitat is often the primary cause of decline for individual species. Much of the habitat restoration and expansion work outlined above is aimed at improving conditions for particular species.

We have continued to include Black Grouse and wading bird habitat improvement actions within agri-environment scheme designs, including at Low Tipalt, High Old Shields and Grindon and have started multi-farm discussions on predator control to protect wading bird chicks. A Black Grouse survey was supported by staff for inclusion in a national survey for the species. Unfortunately this survey identified that Black Grouse numbers have continued to decline in the National Park and that only a small number remain.

The Authority worked on farmland bird conservation with farmers at Roddam Hall, Linhope, Brandon, and Ingram farms to establish and manage wild bird seed mixes to provide food for farmland birds during the 'hungry gap'. We undertook a bird survey at Roddam Hall and recorded increased numbers of target species including yellow hammer and reed bunting.

We continued to coordinate the partnership to provide protection for Hen Harriers in Northumberland and responded to Defra's Hen Harrier Plan. Unfortunately the pair that nested (unsuccessfully) in the National Park in 2013 were seen in the area but didn't nest in 2014.

Surveying for Waxcap fungi was extended to sites in the Cheviots and significant promotional work highlighting the National Park as a nationally important area for these rare fungi was completed. This included promotional materials at visitors centres, inclusion in the Visitor Guide and within a National Parks England promotional leaflet as well as media coverage about a particularly rare species found on Hadrian's Wall.

Work on Ring Ouzel and Great Crested Newts wasn't progressed as planned.

Protect and enhance the historic environment –

Listed Building and Scheduled Monument protection – In the last year a condition report for all the Listed Buildings in the National Park has been produced following a complete re-survey of all sites in 2012/13. This report is still to be fully analysed and at present we are reporting no change in the Listed Building indicator for the last year with 23 (10%) of the National Parks 229 Listed Buildings remaining 'at risk'.

The Authority supported the volunteer led Heritage at Risk project. Volunteers surveyed over 50 sites and undertook small scale conservation work clearing scrub and bracken from a number of monuments. The nett condition figures for monuments saw 1 monument move from 'vulnerable' to 'at risk' and 1 move from 'vulnerable' to 'low risk' with one additional monument scheduled in the last year and classified as 'low risk'. Overall there are now 425 scheduled monuments in the National Park with 53 'at risk' 160 'vulnerable' and 212 at 'low risk'.

We completed five yearly reviews for historic sites leased by the Authority and undertook maintenance work at Thirlwall, Harbottle, and High Rochester. However we did not produce a funding bid to remove High Rochester Roman Fort from the 'at risk' register.

Community archaeology – The last year saw continued strong delivery from the Community Archaeology project with 10 Young Archaeologist Club (YAC) events delivered engaging 151 Children and 58 adults (parents/carers). Four YAC Leaders have been trained and 4 volunteers recruited to maintain the legacy of the YAC now the Community Archaeology project has ended. In addition to the YAC, 37 other engagement events were delivered in the year attracting 332 children and 155 adults with activities including: archaeological surveys; a field academy, school and college visits, and support of National Parks week. Nine themed education packs have been produced and are available for loan

to schools and Groups. The project had a weekly blog and Radio Northumberland spot and had a healthy Facebook and Twitter following.

Cultural Heritage – The Authority supported the development of a Stage 1 Landscape Partnership Scheme for ‘Revitalising Redesdale’ and acted as applicant and accountable body for the £700,000 “Hadrian’s Cavalry” project, supporting a new initiative for museums along Hadrian’s Wall. We contributed to the review of the Hadrian’s Wall World Heritage Site Management Plan and following closure of the Hadrian’s Wall Trust, we worked with partners to manage the transition of the World Heritage Site coordination role to Northumberland County Council.

A Distinctive Place – Performance Summary

Indicator Title	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Assm't
% SSSI and NNR in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition in the National Park as a whole	100%	99%	99%	99%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =
a) % area 'favourable'	28.4%	28.5%	28.6%	29.4%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
b) % area 'unfavourable recovering'	71.3%	70.1%	70.0%	69.3%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
% SSSI and NNR in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition in NNPA management	100%	100%	100%	100%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> =
a) % area 'favourable'	-	-	-	23%	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) % area 'unfavourable recovering'	-	-	-	77%	<input type="checkbox"/>
Number of Listed Buildings 'at risk' in the National Park	23	23	23	23	<input type="checkbox"/> =
a) Number of Listed Buildings 'at risk' rescued during the year	0	0	0	0	<input type="checkbox"/> =
b) % of Listed Buildings 'at risk' rescued during the year	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	<input type="checkbox"/> =
Changes in Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) risk status					
a) Number in High risk category	49	48	52	53	
b) Number in Medium risk category	163	157	162	160	<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
c) Number in Low risk category	212	219	210	212	
a) Number of scheduled monuments 'at high or medium risk' conserved during the year (through NNPA actions)	38	15	0	1	<input type="checkbox"/> ↑
b) % of scheduled monuments 'at high or medium risk' conserved during the year (through NNPA actions)	15.8%	3.5%	0.0%	0.2%	
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"/> =

Good Performance

Acceptable Performance

Poor Performance

↑ Improving Trend

= Static Trend

↓ Declining Trend

Aim 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 –

Agri-environment scheme work – The Authority continued to work with farmers and Natural England to design agri-environment scheme agreements that enhance priority habitats. We facilitated 2 new Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreements (the only 2 remaining in the current programme) so that all farms in the National Park are now in the Environmental Stewardship Scheme. We also worked on agreements to move existing farms from Entry Level to the more environmentally beneficial Higher Level Scheme. 100% of the farmed area of the National Park has been covered by Environmental Stewardship agreements for the last two years, well ahead of the English National Park average of 86%.

There are now 262 Environmental Stewardship agreements covering the National Park, 115 at Entry Level covering 12,515ha, and 147 at Higher Level covering 66,604ha¹. The area of land covered by agreements that include HLS options increased by 1% in the last year representing 85% of the farmed area of the National Park (up from 84%, 74%, 72% and 64% in the previous four years). Agreements also brought over £4.6m into the rural economy in the last year.

We worked through the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) to positively influence the design and priorities for the new national agri-environment scheme (Countryside Stewardship) to help facilitate implementation in the National Park.

2014 information from the national 'Priority Habitat Inventory' demonstrates that there are 38,792 ha of priority habitat within the National Park (37% of the National Park area). 24% of priority habitats are covered by SSSI designation and a further 69% outside of SSSI is covered by HLS agreements. Only 7% of priority habitats are not covered by SSSI designation or HLS agri-environment agreements compared to the English National Parks average of 17%. This strong performance in agri-environment and priority habitats demonstrates the success of the Authority's focus on land management as one of its four priorities.

High quality watercourses –

Reducing pollution to watercourses – The Authority continued the Hill Tracks project, monitoring sediment pollution to watercourses and geotextile trials on tracks over blanket bogs. A Newcastle University student is now involved comparing results from our trial with a similar project at Moor House National Nature Reserve in Upper Teesdale.

The 140 hectare moorland restoration project on Simonside (see Aim 2 for details) was financed from Water Framework Directive (WFD) funding and will mean reduced surface run-off and sedimentation to watercourses, reducing the risk of pollution and flooding as well as improving the bog and heath habitats.

The Authority has also targeted wetland restoration works through Environmental Stewardship agreements such as at Tasset Hall and worked with the Environment Agency

¹ 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.

on the Roman Wall Loughs project to reduce phosphate pollution to the loughs, for example by trialling alternative cattle feeding options.

2014 information shows that 60% of the length of watercourses in the National Park are considered to be in 'high' or 'good' ecological status. This is a 1% improvement on the previous year and compares favourably to the English National Parks average of 37%. The National Park remains the only area of England with pristine rivers ('high' ecological status).

Woodland –

Native woodland planting – Over the course of 2014/15 some 45 hectares of new native broadleaved woodland was approved for planting in addition to woodland work identified via HLS agreements, the majority as new broadleaved woodland blocks, however this figure does include broadleaved compartments within a larger conifer plantation.

Plantation forestry – Steps were taken to minimise the landscape and ecological impact of new and existing forestry plantations through redesign, restructuring or removal altogether. This included a further 65 hectares of conifer being felled and returned to moorland at Threestoneburn. The Authority also held a sustained objection to proposals for a forestry plantation at Wallshield farm and is concerned that a scheme for 34 hectares of conifer with 9 hectares of broadleaves was approved by Defra despite this sustained objection.

Sustainable development and climate change –

Sustainable tourism and transport – The Authority has focused its efforts on a number of sustainable tourism initiatives in the last year. We have focused on promotion of Northumberland as the premier location in the UK to view the night sky and provided training to local businesses on how they can improve their visitor offer to capitalise on this 'out of season' opportunity. We also supported the development of the Sandstone Way long distance cycle route and associated infrastructure. This long distance linear route encourages people to arrive and depart using public transport and of course to use pedal power whilst here.

The Hadrian's Wall Bus (AD122) is an essential piece of the sustainable transport infrastructure and will be an important service for visitors to the Sill once it has been constructed. Following removal of funding by Cumbria County Council the service was at risk. The Authority and Northumberland County Council were able to secure a level of service agreeing a new contract with a private sector operator for a shorter route and placing more responsibility (risk/reward) onto the operator to promote the service. The bus attracted nearly 16,000 passengers well above the 12,000 target and based on this success the operator will run a more frequent hourly service each day between Haltwhistle and Hexham from Easter to September in the year ahead. The Authority continues to work with its partners to secure the future of this important service.

A Living Working Landscape – Performance Summary

Indicator Title	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Assm't
Adapting to climate change	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3	n/a	=
Importance of the visitor economy (value & volume of tourism)				PI reports previous years data	
a) Value of tourism (£ million) - Northumberland National Park	£70.8	£68.0	£66.1		<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
b) Number of tourists (million) - Northumberland National Park	1.38	1.33	1.32		<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
a) Value of tourism (£ million) - Action Areas (inc. NNP)	£162.2	£154.5	£150.2		<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
b) Number of tourists (million) - Action Areas (inc. NNP)	1.69	1.61	1.58		

Good Performance

Acceptable Performance

Poor Performance

↑ Improving Trend

= Static Trend

↓ Declining Trend

Aim 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 –

Community engagement in policy development – The Authority had no policy planning resources for most of the last year with a consequent impact on the actions and targets for the work area. Little progress was made against actions to review the Local Plan (core strategy) and development policies although a timetable was produced and a task and finish group formed in the last quarter once staff were recruited. A level of support for the Tarsset and Greystead community to develop a neighbourhood plan was maintained with the pre-submission consultation completed and the draft plan being reviewed for legal compliance.

Rural Development –

Rural Development review – The Authority successfully gained funding and hosted the Northumberland Uplands 'Leader' programme during the transition year to new European funding arrangements and coordinated the Local Action Group to develop a new Local Development Strategy. As part of our review of rural development, the Authority no longer directly coordinates the European 'Leader' programme, although we will continue to support the development of projects to access the fund which is now administered by Northumberland County Council. Further decisions as to whether the Authority continues to provide direct grant funding through our Area and Sustainable Development Funds are to be made in the year ahead. In the last year we operated a smaller fund, supporting 13 business projects with £31,850 of grants attracting £92,616 in matched funding. Whilst the values are significantly lower than in previous years, the funding ratio has improved with every £1 of grant attracting £2.91 in matched funding compared to the previous three year average of £1 : £1.82.

Rural Enterprise Hubs – Following securing planning permission and funding in the previous year, the Authority completed construction of the Hexham Enterprise Hub at our headquarters. The pods have been fully occupied and further expansion is now planned. An Enterprise Hub at the Sill is in the Strategic Enterprise Plan (SEP) for the North East and the feasibility of a hub in Rothbury is being investigated.

Rural Services – The Authority continues to campaign on rural issues such as access to energy supplies, telecoms, broadband, and transport. The focus in the last year was to retain the Hadrian's Wall Bus service when funding was removed (see Aim 3 for details). Work continues with partners to secure electricity grid connection for properties in Upper Coquetdale.

Support for local communities and business –

Support for communities – The Authority supported 34 community projects with grant funding totalling £71,495 and attracting £214,458 of matched funding, a ratio of £1 : £3.00. Projects included support for local events and shows, and youth based projects such as the development of 'Tale Trail' story walks. As with grant funding for business projects, the values are significantly lower than in previous years due to the review of rural development programmes but the match funding ratios have improved on previous years.

Positive planning service –

Development management – The Development Management service dealt with 92 planning applications, determining 88 and with 4 withdrawn. Of the 88 applications determined, 86 were approved (98%) with only 2 refused. 100% of both ‘major’ and ‘minor’ and 91% of ‘other’ applications were dealt with within statutory timescales. The service dealt with two ‘major’ applications in the last year, one of which was the determination of the Sill development which required significant work to ensure Members and staff involved in the decision making were able to maintain impartiality.

Work with the local housing authority to establish affordable housing models for the National Park were not progressed in the year due to the lack policy planning resources.

Thriving Communities – Performance Summary

Indicator Title	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Assm't
Community grant awards in line with National Park Authority purposes					
a) Number of grants awarded	51	41	56	34	<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
b) Value of grants awarded	£393,014	£175,289	£346,397	£71,495	<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
c) Value of levered/matched funding	£453,146	£175,248	£1,122,824	£214,458	<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
Business grant awards in line with National Park Authority purposes					
a) Number of grants awarded	18	22	29	13	<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
b) Value of grants awarded	£110,342	£245,163	£670,541	£31,850	<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
c) Value of levered/matched funding	£260,263	£581,312	£1,030,837	£92,616	<input type="checkbox"/> ↓
% all planning applications <u>determined</u> which have been approved	100%	96%	n/a	98%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
% of planning applicants satisfied with the service received	82%	n/a	64%	n/a	n/a
Processing of planning applications (major, minor, other)					
a) % of major applications determined within 13 weeks	100%	100%	no apps	100%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
b) % of minor applications determined within 8 weeks	80%	80%	64%	100%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
c) % of 'other' applications determined within 8 weeks	93%	78%	81%	91%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑

Good Performance

Acceptable Performance

Poor Performance

↑ Improving Trend

= Static Trend

↓ Declining Trend

Aim 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 –

Review of the National Park Management Plan – Lack of staffing in the policy planning area for most of the year meant that the statutory review of the Management Plan was not completed as planned. Further, our coordination of the Management Plan Partnership was also limited by this lack of staff resource. However, a timetable and task and finish group are now in place to progress this work in 2015.

Foundation established – We supported the establishment of the Northumberland National Park Foundation as a means for wider society to support the Northumberland National Park as a valued asset of the region.

Communicating the value of the National Park – A 2013 a study into the economic value of England's National Parks concluded that the National Park and its inter-dependent gateway settlements contributed £246 million and over 6,100 jobs to the regional economy in 2012.

Communicate the wider benefits of landscape scale partnership initiatives –

Landscape scale initiatives – The Authority continued to play an active role in a number of landscape scale initiatives. We coordinated the Border Uplands Partnership and led a number of moorland restoration projects (see Aim 2 for details). We also coordinated the River Tyne Catchment Partnership producing a gap analysis comparing areas with water quality problems to current improvement projects identifying further work priorities, and produced a programme of costed improvement projects for consideration in the Environment Agency's medium term budgeting process.

We actively contributed to the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership (LNP), leading work to map ecological networks and producing LNP wide maps for 8 habitat types to be used to identify connectivity priorities and areas of conservation conflict between habitats. We also contributed to the Higher Nature Value (HNV) Farming project helping to organise a farmer's conference and establishing an LNP-wide farmer's forum. The forum will provide a voice for the benefits of upland farming with representation on the forum from 2 National Park farms.

Focused advocacy and partnership working –

Partnership working – The Authority has contributed to partnerships in our priority work areas. In land management we have utilised the North East Farming and Rural Advisory Network, the Local Nature Partnership, and our partnership with Natural England in developing Environmental Stewardship agreements. In rural development we supported the transition of the Northumberland Uplands Leader fund coordination to the County Council and our review of the Authority's rural development programmes indicates a move away from grant administration towards an enabling role through enhanced partnerships. For engaging young people we worked in partnership with the Campaign for National Parks on the Youth Mosaic project and through the Sill project, forged new partnerships with youth organisations such as 'Leading Link' who help young people from across the North East to maximise their potential. The success of the HLF bid for the Sill was built on establishing

productive partnerships across all areas of the project including with our main partner the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) and these partnerships will need to be maintained and enhanced as we move from the development phase into the operational phase of the project.

A Valued Asset – Performance Summary

Indicator Title	2001/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Assm't
National awareness of Northumberland National Park	3%	2%	2%	2%	☒ ↓
Partner survey score - NNPA as an effective partner	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

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

Aim 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 –

Staff – A new continuous appraisal system was implemented last year with 100% of appraisals being completed and all staff being given the opportunity to identify and receive training and development opportunities. 77% of staff received priority training. We offered a number of development opportunities to staff to cover short term projects and vacancies, and began a senior management training/mentoring approach for two staff. The Authority maintained its Investors in People (IIP) status with an overall positive report from the assessor. One of the main recommendations is that the Authority produces a short Organisation Development Strategy to pull together all the various staff development initiatives and to aid communication of the organisations staff development aspirations.

Overall, staff numbers fell to their lowest level for 10 year to an average of 48.7 (full-time equivalent (FTE)) meaning the Authority continues to operate within tight staffing resources. Staff sickness levels fell to a very low figure of 2.63 days per employee (FTE) and the staff turnover rate fell to 12.5%. The Health and Safety Executive Management Standards Indicator Tool was used again to survey all staff on subjects such as: control; management support; and, demands. The results were positive and shared with all staff.

Volunteers – We completed a review of the Volunteer Service and started to implement a number of structural and developmental improvements. With the agreement of the Volunteer Liaison Committee we have abolished the committee and moved to a Working Group structure that will enable volunteers to specialise or generalise across groups based on their interests and enhance staff and volunteer working arrangements. Training is now more targeted based on the activities undertaken by each group. We continued to provide career pathway opportunities for young people and established a youth cabinet for the National Park.

Income generation –

Commercial activities – The Authority completed construction of the Hexham Enterprise Hub and is realising income from letting offices within its headquarters building and ‘pods’ within the grounds. Private sector businesses have operated out of the former National Park Centres at Rothbury and Ingram and from our sites at Walltown and Falstone providing important visitor facilities, and income to the Authority. A further key area of income generation has been to gain full cost recovery for our staff costs when working on projects and in partnerships. Overall, we fell 1% short of our £80,000 income generation target for the year with advertising and commercial sponsorship being the two lagging areas.

Environmental footprint –

Reduced carbon emissions – By March 2015 we had almost halved our annual carbon emissions to 157 tonnes from our baseline measure of 310 tonnes in 2008. This represents an impressive reduction of 49% over 6 years. About half of this improvement is on a ‘like for like’ basis due to ‘genuine improvements’ such as: insulating buildings; installing renewable energy generation at our sites; energy efficient IT equipment, and; fuel efficient fleet and pool vehicles. The other half of the reduction demonstrates the impact of budget reductions on the Authority’s operations and is accounted for by the leasing of buildings and offices to the private sector with a proportion of emissions from our estate now allocated to these businesses.

Streamlined governance –

Governance structures – The Authority met its Business Plan target to reduce the number of Members from 22 to 18 by April 2014. These arrangements provide equal representation between national, county, and local interests. Reduced membership of the Review Group was achieved in June 2014 and the Development Management Committee in January 2015. A Finance and Audit working group has been established to review financial objectives and budgets and a number of task and finish groups have been established to complete specific pieces of work. Member attendance at ‘core’ meetings improved to 78%, up from 75% the year before and above the Defra guideline target of 75%.

Effective communication –

Communications review – A communications review was completed resulting in a number of structural and staff role changes and included the outsourcing of some public relations and corporate communications work. These changes have been implemented alongside the launch of a new visitor facing website and see an increased emphasis on the use of the website and social media to market the National Park as a visitor destination.

The new website was launched in March 2015 behind our original target of September 2014 and is a key element of our external communications strategy being fully integrated with social media channels (see Aim 1 for details on the website and social media). The use of external consultants is seen as the most effective way of communicating core corporate messages externally. Internally regular updates are now being provided to Members and versions of this will be shared with staff and volunteers to communicate our work.

Effective and value for money –

Service reviews – A number of service reviews have been undertaken resulting in structural and staff role changes. As a result of the planning team review, staff were recruited towards the end of the year filling the resource gap that impacted on much of the work programme in this area. As highlighted earlier in this document, service reviews for rural development, volunteering, and communications have all had a major impact on how the Authority is approaching these work areas for the future. The review of management found a resource ‘gap’ between staff and some senior managers and has been addressed through an increase in the number of middle manager roles created.

Value for money – The Authority has managed the risks identified in the Strategic Risk Register and has set a balanced three year budget including actions to reduce our reliance on core grant funding by increasing sources of commercial income.

An Excellent Organisation – Performance Summary

Indicator Title	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Assm't
Inclusive Authority - level of the Equality Standard attained	Achieving	Achieving	Achieving	n/a	n/a
Staff Turnover (excluding end of fixed term contracts)	20.3%	11.1%	17.7%	12.5%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
Number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness absence per FTE	7.00	4.17	6.67	2.63	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
Member participation in attending committees	78%	68%	75%	78%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
Income Generation (% variance actual to target)		n/a	39.8%	-1.3%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↓
Financial outturn (variance to budget as a % of total expenditure)	-4.5%	-8.0%	n/a	-2.6%	<input type="checkbox"/> ↑
Carbon Dioxide (CO2) reduction from National Park Authority operations					
a) Percentage change in CO2 emissions	-26.1%	3 yrly meure	3 yrly meure	-38.1%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑
b) Total CO2 emissions from Authority operations (Kg)	187,240	3 yrly meure	3 yrly meure	156,809	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ↑

Good Performance

Acceptable Performance

Poor Performance

↑ Improving Trend

= Static Trend

↓ Declining Trend

Section 3. Delivering the Vision – Forward Work Programme (2014/15)

Aim 1. A Welcoming Park

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

The Sill: Unspoilt Landscapes, Inspiring People –

- a) Progress the Sill building construction project in 2015 to enable the centre to open in 2017.

Targets:

- Award the stage 1 contract by the end of April 2015;
- Confirm the build costs and award the construction contract by the end of August 2015;
- Remove all operational and visitor centre materials from Once Brewed. Vacate the site by September 2015.

- b) Establish and develop philanthropic and private fundraising activities with the primary focus in 2015/16 to reduce the Sill funding gap.

Targets:

- Continue to facilitate the establishment of the Northumberland National Park Foundation as a registered charity with the Charity Commission;
- Support and develop trustees of the Foundation in the role of project champions for the Sill and the National Park;
- Work with trustees of the Foundation and others to secure £400,000 by August 2015;
- Secure £1m from Local Enterprise Partnership / European funding by October 2015;
- Establish a varied programme of fund raising activities in 2015/16 to include: seeking support from high net worth individuals; approaching charitable trusts and foundations; approaching companies; launching a legacy fund raising programme in autumn/winter 2015, and launching a public fund raising programme in early 2016;
- Investigate and plan 1 or more high profile event(s);
- Develop ongoing fund raising relationships with a range of potential donors to support both the Sill and the Authority more generally.

- c) Establish the staff resources and practices for the Sill.

Targets:

- Recruit Sill National Landscape Discovery Centre Manager by July 2015;
- Recruit two Events Officers by September 2015;
- Develop volunteer roles required to support the Sill operation and begin recruitment of volunteers.

- d) Establish alternative staff accommodation and visitor centre arrangements whilst the Sill is under construction.

Targets:

- Provide alternative operational staff accommodation at Walltown by September 2015;

- Complete construction work to the existing facilities at Walltown to enable temporary visitor centre accommodation providing a legacy of enhanced facilities by September 2015;
 - Complete work to improve the water supply at Walltown providing a legacy of potable (drinking) water to the site.
- e) Implement the communications strategy for the Sill ensuring key messages are effectively communicated.

Targets:

- Target marketing of the Sill Activity Plan to specific user groups;
- Develop partnerships and communication channels with key educational bodies;
- Establish effective communications with local communities and their elected representatives to ensure the Sill is well understood locally;
- Ensure all Visitor Centres carry communications on the Sill.

- f) Develop the new Sill Arts Programme to compliment the construction of the Sill.

Targets:

- Work with a nationally recognised artist and local communities to create works and installations within the National Park;
- Commission Simon Armitage to create 'Poems in the Air' by May 2015, a digital work accessed at a number of sites within Northumberland National Park;
- Commission 1 textile fellowship and 1 Artist Residency by June 2015;
- Deliver 6 Arts Award workshops by June 2015;
- The work from the artists residency/textile fellowship to be exhibited by March 2016.

- g) Start delivery of the Sill Activity Plan achieving 5,500 engagement activities in 2015/16 working towards the target to engage people in 30,000 engagement activities (1,000 events) each year by 2019/20, 50% of which will be delivered by our local partner businesses as part of our commitment to sharing the opportunities that the project brings.

Targets:

- Start delivery of the Education Programme achieving 2,000 engagement activities in 2015/16;
- Start delivery of the Training Programme achieving 500 engagement activities in 2015/16;
- Start delivery of the Public Events Programme achieving 3,000 engagement activities in 2015/16;

*****The Authority has started to develop and align our existing programmes to support the Sill. Authority contributions to the Sill Activity Plan are clearly identified throughout the remainder of this document with: (SILL Activity Plan)*****

Youth engagement –

- h) **(SILL Activity Plan)** Provide formal educational opportunities for young people, continuing the National Park Schools model with local schools and providing education packages for regional/national schools.

Targets:

- Engage with 6 First/Middle schools to complete phase two of “Walking Books” project resulting in the publication of 10 family friendly walks with involvement of art students undertaking Art Award;
- Deliver Arts Award achieving 10 Gold/Silver/Bronze and 30 Discover/Explore awards and investigate Arts Mark for National Park Schools;
- Deliver the “Tail Trails” curriculum linked story sessions to 60 pupils;
- Deliver two education programmes to 6 regional school groups by March 2016;
- Provide school outreach work on 4 natural environment topics to local schools;
- Deliver the New Naturalist programme of wildlife education leading to the John Muir Discovery award for the participants;
- Showcase 3 educational resource packs (Archaeology education packs; Rivers self guided resource, and Arts in the landscape) by providing 3 inset sessions with schools leading to 15 paid school visits;
- Run an educational showcase event at Cawfields with 3 private sector providers (Sill businesses) to 120 pupils linked with National Parks Week activities;
- Engage a private sector provider (Sill business) to run the Moorland Indicators of Climate Change Initiative (MICCI) programme to 120 pupils;
- Build on the out of school “Curlew Club” and deliver at least 10 sessions (150 engagement days) with 2 clusters/federation of schools linked to school outreach work;
- Conduct 5 focus groups with education practitioners’ (clusters of First schools and clusters of Middle/High/Secondary schools) to gain feedback on the development of the education programme.

- i) **(SILL Activity Plan)** Continue to provide training, work experience and career pathways opportunities for young people.

Targets:

- Continue to run the ‘Young Volunteer Ranger’ placement scheme enabling 4 young people to gain experience with the Ranger team through work placements;
- Provide 10 career pathways work experience opportunities across the Authority;
- Attend at least 2 regional college/university careers fairs to promote young volunteering and student placement opportunities with the Authority;
- Undertake a young volunteer taster day by March 2016 and investigate opportunities for regular young volunteering activity;
- Ensure internship and apprenticeship opportunities are included within the agreement with the main contractor for the construction phase of the Sill by September 2015.

- j) **(SILL Activity Plan)** Work with the Campaign for National Parks to deliver the third and final year of the Mosaic Youth Project to engage young people with National Parks.

Targets:

- Recruit 10 young champions to build links between Northumberland National Park and young people;
- 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;
 - Encourage and support young champions to become involved in the governance of the Authority;
 - Work with CNP to ensure partner action plan targets are delivered and a robust exit strategy and project evaluation are in place.
- k) **(SILL Activity Plan)** Develop engagement activities, partnerships and structures to enhance engagement with young people.

Targets:

- Establish a Northumberland National Park Youth Cabinet of 8 to 10 young people aged between 16 and 25 by April 2015. Ensure links to the formal governance structures of the Authority to enable a youth voice in decision making;
- Work on the development of a series of 4 new intergenerational engagement and learning opportunity projects linked with textiles internship (Arts Council funding);
- Support Bellingham Heritage Centre by running 2 exhibitions and using the Carriages to deliver 2 engagement activities;
- Work with social enterprise companies such as 'Leading Link' to develop relationships to bring under-represented groups out to the Sill.

Visitor welcome and infrastructure –

- l) Improve and maintain the Authority's recreation sites and undertake specific infrastructure improvement projects.

Targets:

- Continue to work with business tenants at the Rothbury and Ingram Centres ensuring sustainable services and visitor information provision;
- If permissions are granted, initiate construction of the Bulby's Wood toilet and visitor facilities by May and complete the building works by July 2015;
- Implement the Housteads car park extension by spring 2016;
- Replace (modernise) 7 car park payment machines incorporating 'contactless credit card' technology to improve pricing/ticketing options to support income generation.

- m) Improve visitor welcome and orientation.

Targets:

- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Recruit and train 6 new volunteers to form a 'Welcome and Events' Team to provide an orientation and information service at Authority sites and events (e.g. NP Centre, Dark Sky events, shows);
- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Refresh the volunteer patrolling activity, providing at least 300 'Welcome Patrols' for volunteers to engage the public;
- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Work with volunteers on a "Google Park View" project in May 2015 to film the landscape from popular routes to produce online 360* views of the National Park landscape;
- Continue to work with the existing network of Information Points across the Park to maintain and enhance the quality of visitor information provision;

- n) Continue to work with Natural England and the Highway Authorities to maintain National Trails and promoted walking and cycle routes within the National Park.

Targets:

- Lead the management of the Hadrian's Wall Path national trail on behalf of the Trail Partnership and deliver maintenance improvements along the route;
 - Undertake maintenance improvements on The Pennine Way National Trail. Complete small scale improvements identified through the annual condition survey and prioritised by the new Pennine National Trails Partnership;
 - Work in partnership with Natural England, National Parks and event organisers to develop a national guidance relating to outdoor challenge/charity events.
- o) Maintain the infrastructure for public access by maintaining and improving the rights of way network and open access.

Targets:

- Continue to deliver schedules of work to maintain 30% of the rights of way network and associated sites (most frequently used routes). Target replacing stiles with accessible gates and surface improvements on promoted routes;
- Survey bridges and make a bid to the County Council for necessary improvements;
- Undertake national benchmarking surveys on 5% of the PRow network in May and November 2015;
- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Survey the condition of a further 5% of the Public Rights of Way and promoted route network to inform the preparation of an annual maintenance/improvement programme using staff and volunteers. Hold re-fresher training for existing volunteers and invite new volunteers to assist with this process (end of September deadline);
- Hold 3 meetings per year and continue to work in partnership with the Police, the Highway Authority other partners and stakeholders through our Land Managers Liaison Group to monitor and prevent illegal use on the PRow network, rural crime and improve visitor safety and experience in the countryside and develop long term sustainable solutions to combat the impact on path surface;
- Continue to host the Joint Local Access Forum (JLAF), re-recruiting the full membership and establishing a core group to develop and deliver a work plan.

Activities and events –

- p) **(SILL Activity Plan)** Initiate the transition to 'The Sill' by delivering a programme of accessible activities and events targeted at engaging new and under-represented audiences.

Targets:

- Deliver a 3 day family focused event on the theme of "Productive Landscapes" for National Parks Week in July/August 2015 achieving 300 visitor days;
- Deliver the "Over the Hills" exhibition in 2 venues with 4 pop-up exhibitions and a programme of 10 associated events to engage 100 parents/children;
- Deliver 3 outreach events engaging 300 individuals;
- Provide staff and support to aid delivery of the Glendale Children's Day, which engages over 1,500 children;
- Run a minimum of 15 "Sill branded" Solar and Star gazing events at Once Brewed and other Dark Sky Discovery Sites by March 2016;
- Organise an International Dark Sky Park conference in October 2015;
- Arrange 1 Dark Sky training workshop to tourism providers by March 2016;
- Support and promote the annual volunteer led (Sill branded) walks programme to engage 650 people through 69 walks by December 2015;

- Arrange 1 tourism visit (Sill Tourism Case Study) with a local educational establishment by March 2016;
- Work in partnership with the disabled ramblers association to develop off-road routes suitable for use by motorised Trampers and mobility scooters. Plan an event for summer 2015;
- Work with National Parks England to develop an all Parks health and well being project. Engage 50 individuals through the project;
- Support the hosting of the Tour of Britain cycle event in Northumberland in September 2015.

Marketing, website and social media –

- q) Ensure high quality marketing materials are produced and distributed to promote visits to the National Park.

Targets:

- Manage the integration of the Sill brand with the National Park destination brand by March 2016;
- Produce a self-funded National Park Visitor Guide by March 2016;
- Ensure high quality design and information in both print and web format for;
 - Promotional materials to support activities and events.
 - Information Points and interpretation information.
 - Leaflets and self-guided materials (e.g. walking routes).
- Support promotion of the Sill Activity Plan in print and on social media by updating the image library with images of activities and events (esp. Young people / Mosaic project);
- Produce a new leaflet/web download for the National Park section of Hadrian's Wall detailing car parks, footpaths and local businesses/services;

- r) Ensure the newly launched National Park website is regularly updated with new visitor facing content and fully integrated with social media channels.

Targets:

- Ensure the visitor facing design and structure for the website remains fresh by continuously updating new destination and experience content;
- Generate income through advertising and sponsorship on the website and ensure the website encourages income generation by enabling activity and event bookings;
- Increase number of unique visitors to the website by 20% from 39,000 to 47,000 by March 2016;
- Continue to mainstream social media into the Authority's work and ensure it is fully integrated with the website. Increase number of social media posts generated by staff and members;
- Increase number of followers to the Authority's Twitter account by 30% from 8,000 to 10,400 by March 2016;
- Increase number of followers to the Authority's FaceBook account by 30% from 3,200 to 4,150 by March 2016.

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).

Aim 2. A Distinctive Place

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

Policy Framework –

The recently adopted Natural Environment Vision for 2035 is a key policy driver for work that delivers the ‘Distinctive Place’ Aim.

Aims 4 and 5 also contain actions on developing the policy framework relating to the review of the National Park Management Plan and the review of the Local Plan.

Protect and enhance the natural environment and landscape –

- a) Undertake habitat improvement work to contribute towards the recently adopted Natural Environment Vision for 2035 and Biodiversity Action Plan targets. Specific targets for the year ahead include:

Targets:

- Undertake Local Nature Partnership (LNP) wide habitat opportunity mapping on behalf of the partnership for 6 Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats. Identify overlapping opportunity areas and design intersecting areas (mosaic habitat) to avoid conservation ‘conflict’;
- Work with the LNP Great Upland Forest group to utilise habitat opportunity mapping to produce a ‘woodland (funding) prospectus’ by September 2015;
- Generate maps and information in preparation for the new Countryside Stewardship scheme enabling the Authority to work with land managers to target new agreements;
- Map habitats using datasets on species-rich grassland, satellite imagery, and recent survey data to identify possible waxcap sites and butterfly introduction sites;
- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Work with volunteers and contractors to remove invasive species on at least 2 moorland sites;
- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Organise at least 20 practical conservation and site maintenance volunteer task days (circa. 100 volunteer days);

- **(Sill Activity Plan)** Support the construction phase of the Sill by continuing the Whin Sill grassland roof trials with volunteers, determining the substrate and species mix and arranging for local provenance plants to be grown. Appoint an organisation to design and develop the Whin Sill grass roof for the Sill development.
- b) **(SILL Activity Plan)** Undertake specific species work to contribute towards the recently adopted Natural Environment Vision for 2035 and Biodiversity Action Plan targets. Specific targets for the year ahead include:

Targets:

- Staff and volunteers to complete a comprehensive survey of Black Grouse in the Hadrian's Wall area of the National Park during the lekking season to contribute to the national Black Grouse survey;
- Contribute to the national action plan for protecting Hen Harriers coordinating the partnership in Northumberland and engaging volunteers in monitoring winter roost sites and providing nest site protection;
- Develop a project case and investigate potential funding to help deliver a pollinator project;
- Produce a Bumblebee map/atlas for the National Park from records for the past 10 years. Use the atlas to target community and volunteer involvement in a Bumblebee survey in summer 2015;
- Involve local communities in waxcap surveys across the National Park and map the results to further establish the Park as a nationally important area.

- c) Landscape improvement work.

Targets:

- Contribute to the development of the "Revitalising Redesdale" HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme bid by May 2015, and if the bid is successful support the project from October 2015;
- Work with Northern Powergrid to:
 - Complete the undergrounding 5,000 metres of low voltage power cables within the current funding scheme by July 2015, and;
 - Survey and prioritise undergrounding projects for future undergrounding works by December 2015. Engage communities in this process.

Protect and enhance the historic environment –

- d) Prepare and consult on a Historic Environment Plan for the National Park as part of the review of the National Park Management Plan.

Target:

- Incorporate the key objectives and targets in the Management Plan by December 2015.

- e) Work with the Heritage at Risk volunteer group to monitor and maintain scheduled monuments in the National Park.

Target:

- Implement alternative solutions for the submission and storage of digital reports / condition surveys;

- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Support volunteers to survey 50 priority (“at risk” and “vulnerable”) monuments by March 2016;
- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Engage volunteers to undertake practical conservation work, such as earthwork repairs, bracken control, and vegetation clearance on 5 sites to remove them from “at risk” or “vulnerable” status.
- Complete repair work to Harehaugh Hillfort by end of May 2015;

f) Support a programme of community archaeology activities.

Targets:

- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Continue to support the North Pennines and Northumberland Uplands Young Archaeologists Club (YAC) to deliver 6 events in 2015/16;
- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Deliver 1 module within the National Park for the joint Altogether Archaeology project with the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Continue to support community archaeology groups around the National Park including helping the Tynedale North of the Wall group to become administratively independent from the Authority and able to run their own events programme by March 2016.

g) **(SILL Activity Plan)** Support academic research on the historic environment of the National Park.

Targets:

- Support a Heritage Management MSc student from the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (ICCHS) at Newcastle University to complete research and produce a case study on cultural heritage in the National Park;
- Support a PhD student from Sheffield University to undertake a study on the impact of 20th century military operations on the archaeology of the Otterburn Training Area. Support the research throughout 2015/16 for completion in 2018;
- Work with Newcastle University to submit a follow-on funding bid by the end of April 2015 to develop engagement and interpretation materials for the Sill from a previous PhD on ‘Concealed Communities’ within the National Park. Work to start in September 2015 if funding is successful.

h) Act as accountable body for the Roman Cavalry project (with key partners to lead on delivery).

Targets:

Establish partnership, operational and financial protocols and assist with the planning of the project for delivery in 2017.

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).

Aim 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 achieve sustainable land management which particular emphasis on the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Targets:

- Continue to add value to existing 'Environmental Stewardship' schemes by reviewing at least 6 schemes and negotiating appropriate changes;
- Work with Natural England to identify priority farms in the National Park to approach regarding entry to the new 'Countryside Stewardship' scheme;
- Work with Natural England to identify and develop proposals for landscape scale Countryside Stewardship Schemes where individual farms are unlikely to qualify for the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme;
- Coordinate and encourage landowners to become familiar with the new Countryside Stewardship scheme (including woodland and water elements) by holding 2 awareness/training events and offering one to one advice;
- Prepare bracken management plans for at least two holdings;
- Prepare pasture woodland planting plans for at least two holdings;
- Review the management of holdings within Simonside Hills SAC with Natural England and the land managers following changes in tenure;
- Work with land managers and Natural England to secure a long term burning plan and moorland management plan for the eastern end of Simonside Hill SAC;
- Contribute to burning plans for moorland sites on the Otterburn Training Area and deliver training for local Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service staff;
- Work with partners to scope the opportunities for delivering the Farm Advice Framework contract in the National Park by June 2015.

- b) Work in partnership with educational institutions and land managers to conduct research and facilitate information sharing.

Targets:

- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Develop a strategy with Newcastle University for mutually beneficial research within the National Park (SILL case study);

- Work with College Valley Estate and Newcastle University to implement phase two of the cattle GPS tracking project on the Cheviot Massif by obtaining resources to track 10 cattle and analyse their movements in relation to environmental factors;
- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Develop a teachers pack for the cattle tracking project that puts information into the context of the National Curriculum so that schools can become involved (SILL case study);
- Continue to manage the wild goat populations in the north of the National Park by facilitating the North Cheviot Goat Management Group and annual goat census, and establishing a new Upper Coquetdale and Central Cheviot Goat Management Group and management plan;
- Work with farmers to develop a farmer-led forum for farmers across the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership area as called for by farmers participating in the High Nature Value Farming project.

High quality watercourses –

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

Targets:

- Facilitate applications to the ‘Water’ funding element of Countryside Stewardship Scheme available in the Till, Aln and Coquet Catchments in 2015;
 - Continue to coordinate the Tyne Catchment Partnership, supporting the ongoing development of the partnership and seeking opportunities for it to become self-sustaining;
 - Work with partners to investigate water bodies in ‘moderate’ condition to determine the reasons for failure and solutions to improve their condition;
 - Continue the Roman Wall Loughs project to improve water quality in the loughs catchment, including installing a crossing point east of Greenlee Lough to reduce siltation, and continuing to monitor inflows.
- d) Continue the Hill tracks project to reduce sediment pollution to watercourses.

Targets:

- Work with Natural England to continue monitoring water quality in the Cheviots and Upper Coquetdale;
- Continue to monitor the trial of the new geo-textile material designed to facilitate access over moorland. Compare results of the trial with the Moorhouse project trial results;
- Use the analysis of the water quality monitoring data collected to date to prioritise and implement capital works trials on existing tracks to mitigate impacts on water quality;
- Facilitate the production of a long term strategic plan for sustainable track management on an estate in the Cheviots.

Woodland –

- e) Work with land managers to achieve sustainable woodland creation and management in the National Park.

Targets:

- Hold a Member policy conference on woodland and forestry in April 2015;
- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Host the UK National Park Authorities Landscape and Woodland officers annual training seminar in October 2015;

- Identify opportunities for new woodland creation through the ‘woods’ strand of Countryside Stewardship Scheme available in 2015;
- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Engage 10 volunteers to survey 20 ‘Section 39’ woodland sites and undertake maintenance work at 5 sites by the end of March 2016;
- Promote and encourage the writing and use of woodland management plans, ensuring the development of 3 management plans for Forestry Commission woodlands and consulting on 7 further woodland management plans within the National Park;
- Contribute to Forestry Commission, Forest Design plans including felling and replanting proposals for Uswayford Forest;
- Undertake forestry plantation opportunity mapping and work with key partners to consider the appropriateness of additional forestry plantations within the National Park.

Sustainable development and climate change –

- f) Support sustainable tourism and transport development in the National Park through partnership delivery.

Targets:

- Work through the partnership between Visit England and National Parks England to develop a National Park specific campaign to promote National Parks as a visitor destination;
- Continue to be an investor-partner and board member of Northumberland Tourism Limited to develop all of Northumberland as a visitor destination;
- Chair the Hadrian’s Wall Country Bus Partnership and invest up to £12,000 to ensure the Hadrian’s Wall Bus operates and is well marketed;
- Sit on the Northumberland Cycle Tourism Group and support the newly developed Sandstone Way long distance cycle route through it first year;
- Sit on the Northumberland Cycling and Walking Board and support development of a county-wide strategy for walking and cycling.

- g) Mainstream climate change mitigation work into the Authority’s work programme and focus on adaptation work.

Targets:

- Complete a review of the Authority’s Climate Change Adaptation Report and submit to DEFRA by December 2015
- Work with Northumberland Community Flooding Partnership to support communities in and around the park including preparing a plan for the Hareshaw burn near Bellingham;
- Review current provision of weather stations and data collection in the National Park.
- Continue trials of automatic wildfire detection system with key project partners and interest groups by March 2016.
- Collaborate with European partners on a Wildfire Risk Modelling project.

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.

Aim 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) Review the Local Plan (formerly the "Local Development Framework - Core Strategy") and supporting development policies and adopt a new/revised Local Plan by April 2018.

Targets (2015-16 only):

- Prepare a project plan and set up governance arrangements for the review;
- Begin to update the evidence base studies/research to inform the review;
- Update the vision, aims and objectives for the Local Plan;
- Publish a revised Local Development Scheme, setting out the proposed timetable for the production of the Plan, thereby keeping local communities informed;
- Update the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) setting out how we will consult/engage with our local communities;
- Prepare for statutory public consultation ensuring our communities have their say;
- Liaise with partner organisations/authorities in order to meet the Duty to Cooperate.

- b) Work with Communities to help them develop Neighbourhood Plans

Targets:

- Work constructively at the 'pre-submission' stage with Tasset and Greystead Parish Council on the development of their Neighbourhood Plan.
 - Following submission for independent inspection, undertake public consultation/referendum to allow the plan to be legally adopted if the referendum is successful;
 - Support development of Neighbourhood Plans in Rothbury and in Mid-Coquettale and designate the neighbourhood planning area.
- c) Hold a National Park Forum by March 2016 and make Awards to those who have made a significant contribution to the National Park.

Rural development –

- d) Embed the transition in the Authority's approach to supporting rural development in the National Park.

Targets:

- Manage existing Area Fund and Sustainable Development Fund projects through to completion;
- Produce a legacy publication by summer 2015 outlining a selection of projects from the last five years delivered through the Area and Sustainable Development Funds;
- Complete a review to determine the Authority's future direct grant / discretionary funding arrangements by June 2016;
- Act as an advocate for the Area communities and businesses by facilitating meetings with at least 10 external funding providers/partners including Leader with the aim to offer enhanced partnership working in order to deliver sustainable rural development;
- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Support 20 park wide local events and shows through a combination of sponsorship and attendance;
- **(SILL Activity Plan)** Enable groups and businesses to set-up and/or expand existing tourism or education offers through the Sill (e.g. dark skies, nature tourism, cycling);
- Develop and maintain a database of interested parties that could deliver activities on behalf of the Sill.

- e) Actively contribute to the North East Rural Growth Network initiative.

Targets:

- Stimulate rural growth and generate commercial income for the Authority by building 2 new pods at the Hexham Enterprise Hub by June 2015 to be fully occupied by September 2015;
- Recruit up to 50 associate members of the Hexham Enterprise Hub by September 2015;
- Start developing plans for a rural enterprise hub to operate from the Sill by March 2016.

Support for local communities and business –

- f) Increase engagement with communities.

Targets:

- Update evidence of community needs by various methods of data gathering (i.e. parish councils, drop in sessions, networking and partnership working);
- Offer in depth support to communities, including directing community groups and businesses to potential funding sources, sharing best practice and providing continued advice and guidance;
- Ensure community involvement in reviewing the National Park Management Plan and Local Plan, supporting community evidence gathering and consultation activities (e.g. Management Plan community consultation in Aug/Sept 2015).

Positive planning service –

- g) Continue to operate a positive and efficient development management service.

Targets:

- At least 80% of all valid pre-application enquiries dealt with within 28 days;
- At least 80% of planning applications to be validated within 5 working days;
- At least 80% of all valid (non-major) planning applications determined within 8 weeks, and;

- At least 50% of all valid major planning applications determined within 13 weeks or in line with agreed Planning Performance Agreements.
- h) Improve the effectiveness of the development management service.

Targets:

- Publicise an updated customer focused validation checklist (local information list) by end April 2015;
- Ongoing review development management procedures to ensure they are efficient and effective;
- Deliver 1 training and workshop sessions to Members to enhance their understanding and decision making;
- Share information and hold workshops on subjects such as: agricultural and forestry permitted development rights, and dark skies (lighting management);
- Produce a guidance document for use in determining planning applications for new agricultural, forestry, sporting, and recreational tracks;
- Positive engagement with agents and developers to help support and enable appropriate new development within the National park;
- Undertake monitoring of planning applications and where necessary enforcement action to ensure development accords with policy.

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.

Aim 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) Engage all key partners and decision making bodies in the statutory review of the Northumberland National Park Management Plan with all partners signing up to a shared vision and aims for the National Park to 2035;

Targets:

- Undertake a review of the existing Management Plan document;
- Engage partners to inform a draft revised Management Plan and complete public consultation throughout 2015;
- Complete a draft new/amended Plan by December 2015;
- All stakeholders to adopt the Management Plan for 2016-2020 by March 2016.

- b) Ensure the Sill project is used as a platform to demonstrate the value of the National Park.

Targets:

- Use the Sill theme teams to engage national, regional, and local partners with the economic, environmental and social benefits of the National Park.

Communicate the wider benefits of landscape scale partnership initiatives –

- c) Work in partnerships beyond the National Park boundary to realise landscape scale benefits to the National Park.

Targets:

- Continue to work in partnership with Kielder Forest and Water Park to raise awareness and increase tourism linked to the 'International Dark Sky Park' designation, the largest dark sky area in Europe;
- Continue to work through the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership (LNP) on landscape scale projects such as 'Peatlands' and 'Great Upland Forest' projects and communicate the scale and benefits of such cross boundary initiatives;
- Contribute to the production of a Defra funded, pilot LNP 'Natural Capital Investment Plan'.

Focused advocacy and partnership working –

- d) Focus partnership working on the Authority's priorities of land management, rural development, youth engagement, and The Sill. Through these partnerships, ensure that the Authority plays a strong advocacy role on issues such as rural services, broadband and rural development.

Targets:

- Continue to work on land management and, habitat and species conservation on a landscape scale through the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership (e.g. Higher Nature Value farming);

- Continue to work through the North East Farming and Rural Advisory Network (NEFRAN) to inform land management and rural development policy, and advocate the needs of rural communities on issues such as rural services and broadband;
- Through NEFRAN, influence the rural development policy of Defra and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP);
- Continue to represent Protected Landscapes on the North East Historic Environment Forum to advocate rural historic environment issues at a wider regional level;
- Continue to develop close partnerships with Northumberland County Council and the LEP on rural growth, tourism development, planning policy, and cultural and heritage protection and promotion;
- Continue to work with Northumberland Tourism Limited to promote the National Park as part of the wider tourism product and implement relevant elements of the Northumberland Destination Management Plan.

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.

Aim 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) Develop our staff, Members and volunteers and provide an effective human resources service.

Targets:

- All staff and Members to have effective appraisals. The Leadership Team to complete 360 degree feedback appraisals by June 2015;
- Hold 2 'all staff' events, one to be held in the National Park and to include Members and volunteers;
- Provide 3 Member training events to include: planning, finance, and a commercial income visit to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park;
- Ensure all staff have completed equalities training by June 2015;
- Support 2 members of staff to undertake senior management training development opportunities;
- Continue the process of updating priority Human Resources policies by September 2015.

b) Undertake actions to ensure a high standard of staff welfare is maintained.

Targets:

- Complete a review of the Authority's 'Culture and Values' and implement any changes by December 2015;
- Implement actions from the Investors In People (IIP) assessment conducted in February 2015;
- Focus on staff survey results to help improve staff understanding of their roles;
- Organise 'Listening Officer' training for relevant staff by.

c) Ensure the provision of a safe and healthy workplace and working environment for employees and volunteers and to ensure the health, safety and welfare of members of the general public and anyone else who may be affected by the activities of the Authority.

Targets:

- Ensure members, managers, staff and volunteers are engaged with and know what is expected of them in respect to Health and Safety (H&S);
- Managers ensure relevant H&S targets are cascaded into officers' individual forward work programmes;
- H&S competencies discussed and training identified at appraisals by end of June 2015 and training completed by March 2016;
- The Sill project - All client Construction Design and Management (CDM) responsibilities are met regarding construction works relating to the project;
- Continue the focus on risk assessment training to increase staff awareness and skills in assessing risks;
- Implement a volunteer training matrix so that training is targeted to specific volunteering activities to ensure the H&S needs of volunteers, the Authority and the public are met.

Income generation –

d) Manage income streams and develop further commercial income generation initiatives.

Targets:

- Update the 3-year income generation strategy by July 2015 based on lessons learnt and maintain progress on income generation to achieve the target of £150,000 additional by March 2016.

Streamlined governance –

e) Ensure a youth voice is represented with the Authority's governance structures.

Targets:

- (see Youth Cabinet target in Aim 1).

Effective communication –

f) Complete IT projects to provide improved platforms to enable effective communications.

Targets:

- Support the new National Park website ensuring the new site operates effectively and is continuously updated with current content;
- Replace the current Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system with a low cost Microsoft Exchange/Outlook solution for holding corporate contacts by March 2016;
- Upgrade the phone system to establish a more stable system with the functionality required by the Authority by December 2015;
- Improve internet speeds and reliability to the Authority's office sites by resolving issues with the new superfast broadband line to Eastburn, installing a second fibre optic line to Rothbury by June 2015, and installing a fibre optic line to Once Brewed when the BT exchange has been upgraded;
- Replace the IT server hardware and upgrade the software to ensure it meets operational needs by September 2015;
- Improve the IT back-up system, replacing physical tapes with online back-up facilities by December 2015;
- Assist in the development and implementation of the IT specifications for the Sill development;
- Upgrade the 'mobile mapping' software to a low cost/free system to enable mobile surveying for operational staff by December 2015;
- Enhance the map based content embedded within the Authority website by replacing the GIS/mapping software;
- Implement new online volunteer management software to improve coordination of volunteers and enable improved communication with and between volunteers.

g) Implement the outcomes of the Communications and Marketing review to improve the effectiveness of the Authority's communications.

Targets:

- Engage corporate communications support by 1st May 2015;
- Develop a rolling communications plan by 1st June 2015;
- Regular programme of corporate communications;
- Monitor and review activities targets;
- Test business continuity planning for communications.

Effective and value for money –

h) Develop a new medium term Business Plan for the period 2016-2019

Targets:

- Leadership Team to develop a new medium term strategy and set of priorities for the Authority for approval by Members by October 2015;
- Produce a new simplified three-year Business Plan aligned to the three-year financial plan to be presented to Authority for approval at March 2016 Authority meeting.
- Review and renew performance management system to ensure alignment with medium term priorities by December 2015.

i) Complete outstanding service reviews (most completed in 2014/15) to identify the potential for service improvements, savings and/or the outsourcing of services.

Targets:

- Complete the Rural Development (Area Fund, SDF, LEADER) review by completing the review of discretionary/grant funding and recruiting the Rural Development Officer post;
 - Undertake a review of Specialist services (landscape, ecology, archaeology, access, and design services);
 - Undertake and complete Corporate Services Department review.
- j) Develop a three year balanced budget which accommodates the requirements of the Sill by March 2016.

Targets:

- Develop robust financial and resource plans for the Authority to address uncertain grant and income scenarios;
- Incorporate the financial implications of the construction phase of the Sill on the Authority's medium term budget plan;
- Develop income streams and cost effective methods for running the Sill if the project is approved;
- Use reserves and loans to manage cashflow requirements of the Sill;
- Resource the Finance Department to deal with the financial management of the Sill and Roman Cavalry projects;
- Adopt treasury policy and invest to save strategies, and;
- Manage the handover of audit arrangements from Deloitte to Earnst and Young.

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.