



Corporate Plan

2004/05



June 2004

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Foreword

Northumberland National Park Authority welcomes the opportunity to produce a new Corporate Plan to replace the Best Value Performance Plans. We see this as a helpful step forward because it chimes with our forward planning as a result of the move to Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

This Corporate Plan should therefore be seen as a tactical reporting and planning document. We aim to produce a Corporate Plan which is highly relevant to Northumberland, describes the issues this National Park is facing and the action being taken to address those issues. We have deliberately structured the document to follow the key priority themes in our 10 year visionary National Park Management Plan. The Corporate Plan will be used to drive forward individual staff action plans as part of our annual appraisal programme and senior management performance system.

We are now able to spell out in one single document our long-term priorities, our efforts to achieve them by identifying areas for improvement and the results of those efforts. This helps develop and embed more effective management systems which should produce improved results as well as identifying areas for greater investment.

Due to the timing of new Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime for English national park authorities we have only been able to include the partial results of this exercise in the Corporate Plan. The preparation of a Corporate Improvement Plan is the process. It has to be regarded as work in progress which will lead to several iterations of this document.

This version (September 15th 2004) includes notes on the development of the Action Area Approach which Members have concluded is the core to service improvements.

They have said:

“The Authority wishes to engage people in creating or maintaining thriving communities and a sustainable economy, a living working landscape and opportunities for all to understand, enjoy and contribute to the special qualities of the National Park.”

We see the special qualities as key local assets and wish to see projects which build on those special qualities (a rich biodiversity and cultural heritage, and a true sense of tranquillity) or allow people to connect better with them. For the time being our emphasis will be on projects which demonstrate that the National Park’s designation, especially compared to other similar landscapes, make an appreciable difference as perceived by local people and visitors.

The Vision

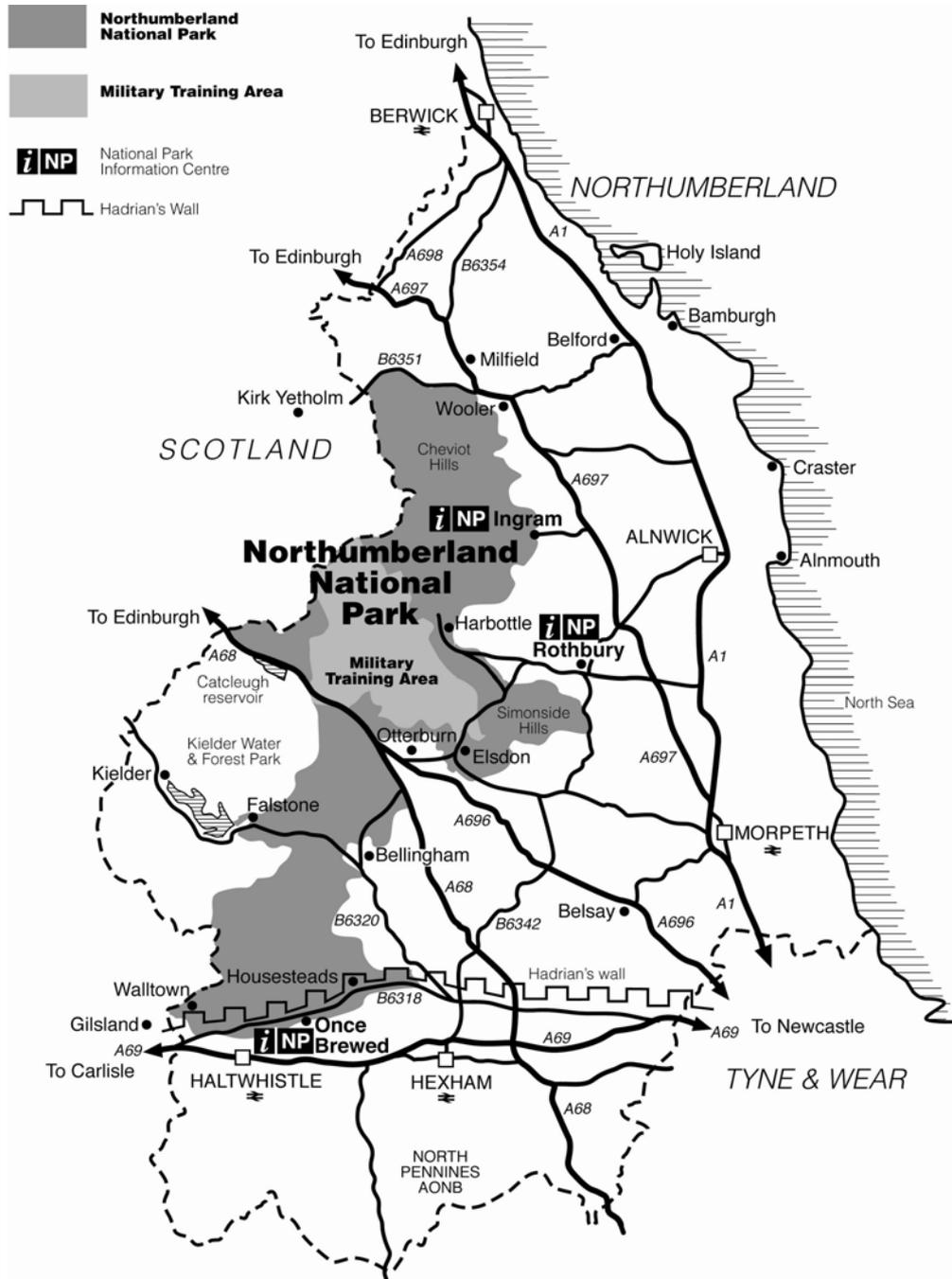
Combining National Park purposes and local socio-economic well-being is at the heart of the long term Vision for Northumberland National Park. This has been developed as part of the Authority's long term planning process. The Vision is:

'Northumberland National Park Authority will be proactive, innovative and forward-looking, working towards a National Park with thriving communities and a sustainable local economy grounded in its special qualities, including a richness of cultural heritage and biodiversity, a true sense of tranquillity and a distinct character associated with a living, working landscape, in which everyone has an opportunity to understand, enjoy and contribute to those special qualities.'



Sense of Place

Parliament decided that the most beautiful, spectacular and dramatic areas of England and Wales should be given the status of National Park and that a special local authority should look after them and help people to understand and enjoy them.



Northumberland National Park is remote, wild and sparsely populated. Only 1,936 people live in the 400 square miles of the National Park. There are an estimated 1.4 million visitor days each year which makes it the North East's most popular visitor attraction. Northumberland National Park is unique in its wide open spaces and the evidence to be found of its long history.

Hadrian's Wall is a World Heritage Site and spans the Park's southern boundary; this is a very popular visitor area whose popularity is continuing to grow assisted by the new Hadrian's Wall

National Trail. Many of the National Park Authority's physical resources are directed at this area with an information centre, ranger base, toilets and car parking facilities. Working in the Hadrian's Wall area is complicated as this is a regionally significant visitor destination with international appeal and status. Local and regional partnership working is well developed and effective.

The high windswept moors of the Borders, the Wark and Kielder Forests and the rivers Rede and North Tyne make up the **North Tyne and Redesdale** area of the National Park. Partnership working is more fragmented in this area but effective nonetheless. The area has fewer of the Authority's physical assets. It has neither an information centre, toilet block or ranger base. The area has a substantial but largely uncharted built heritage and a very rich cultural heritage built upon traditions and stories. Visitor activity is concentrated on the Kielder Water area which is just outside the National Park.

The **Upper Coquetdale** area of the National Park covers the landscapes around the market town of Rothbury. The area has a high level of the Authority's built heritage resources including castles and other historic and archaeological sites open to the public plus a Visitor Centre, ranger and out-posted staff base and several toilet and car park facilities. Partnership working is proving problematical. Whilst Rothbury is a popular visitor destination and cultural centre, visitor numbers to the rest of the Upper Coquetdale area are at best static. The area includes part of the Otterburn Training Area where access opportunities are necessarily limited.

The **Cheviot Hills** are the spectacular northern border with Scotland; the administrative boundary is not always obvious on the ground. The area is unique within Europe for the volume and quality of the archaeological resource. The landscape is characterised by wide horizons, big skies and a sense of wilderness. Visitor numbers have been on the decline for a number of years. The Authority has a Visitor Centre set within the Cheviot Hills, a number of toilets, car parks and a popular riverside area for open access. Partnership working is at an early stage but is developing in a positive way in both England and Scotland.

An Action Area Approach

We have adopted an Action Area Approach based on the above 4 distinctive areas of the National Park. The Authority will focus its resources on the Action Area programme, giving emphasis to regeneration based on the achievement of National Park purposes through community action and the engagement of people to maintain or create thriving communities, a living working landscape and opportunities for all to understand, enjoy and contribute to the special qualities of the National Park.

What Type of National Park Authority?

In 1997 the Northumberland National Park Authority was established as a special purpose local authority in its own right.

National Parks were established in England and Wales through the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949. Designation of the Northumberland National Park was in 1956 and for the first 40 years it was administered by a Committee of Northumberland County Council. From 1974 it had its own Chief Officer, staff and special funding arrangements. Independent reviews of the National Parks took place in 1974, as part of the then local government reorganisations, and in 1991. This second review recommended the creation of free standing National Park Authorities (NPAs) for all the National Parks. This was established by the Environment Act, 1995, which also updated the statutory purposes and created the current stand-alone National Park Authority in 1997.

Recently, DEFRA has undertaken a "Review of English National Park Authorities" (2002). It examined the current governance, funding, operation and potential value of the National Park Authorities. It drew a raft of conclusions and recommendations, which have been followed up by an action plan. DEFRA intends to issue a Circular or ministerial statement to set out a modern view on their role and functions in a very changed context.

Northumberland National Park Authority is an independent part of the local government of Northumberland. There are 22 members. Twelve are elected councillors appointed to the National Park Authority by the County Council (6) and district councils (6). The Secretary of State at the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs appoints 10 members, six to represent national public interest and four to represent parish councils. The Authority carries out some similar duties within the National Park to those undertaken by the County Council and District Councils outside.

Parliament decides the powers and duties of National Park Authorities and the Environment Act 1995 has set two purposes:

- '(a) conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park and*
- (b) promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public.'*

It is also the duty of the National Park Authority:

'in pursuing in relation to the National Park the purposes specified, that it shall seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park, but without incurring significant expenditure in doing so, and shall for that purpose co-operate with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic and social development within the area of the National Park.'

and

'It is the duty of every public body, public office holder and public utility...., to have regard to the National Park purposes in their work.'

Key Challenges and Opportunities

The overall challenge is to develop a refreshed mandate for National Parks. The original purposes of designation have stood the test of time and remain relevant, but the DEFRA Review has confirmed that the mandate for the Authorities needs to be interpreted in a modern context. In that sense, the key challenges and opportunities arise from the context in which we work, which has been transformed in 45 years.

The challenges facing the National Park Authorities in the pursuit of the purposes of designation include:

- the nature of the rural economy which, while it is more diverse, in many ways is weaker than the 1940s – the 'leaky bucket';
- the recognition of the need for integrated approaches because of the interdependence of agriculture and other land uses with tourism, recreation and other industries (which the Foot and Mouth Epidemic of 2001-02 brought into sharp focus) and therefore the need to reposition the National Park Authorities;
- the greater accessibility of remote areas, the strengthening of the town and country economic and social links;
- the consequent growth of tourism and the diversification of the local community; but also
- the weakening of the local economic activity to the point that it is difficult to speak of a rural economy and community;
- the loss of capacity in rural communities;
- the loss of biodiversity;
- the erosion of distinctive cultural diversity;
- the erosion of tranquillity;
- the need for further diversification of the economy; and
- the loss of opportunity for persons of limited means to access the National Park as a result of reduced school visits and other social links.

The opportunities which will assist the National Park Authorities to reform and reinvigorate their mission include:

- the potential, with CAP reform, both Pillar One reform and the other policy shifts around Pillar Two on rural development, to build a new sort of environmental and cultural economy;
- the current emphasis on the social and economic value of biodiversity, the cultural inheritance and local distinctiveness;
- the greater emphasis on sustainable development;
- a new planning regime and new planning policies focussed on sustainable development and an emphasis on community engagement;
- better appreciation of the need for and support of community action, including new forms of enterprise;
- the advocacy of integrated solutions and the prospects for an enhanced role in rural delivery as a result of the Haskins Report and the Modernising Rural Delivery Initiative;
- the opportunities arising from regional devolution and the new localism to build new alliances and develop locally grounded solutions; and
- the drive for social inclusion.

Priorities

Northumberland National Park Authority's over-riding priority is to deliver the new Vision. This means working in new and innovative ways in new areas of work. It also means doing less of the activities we used routinely to undertake.

We will:

- work with the local community, businesses and other partners to deliver National Park purposes through sustainable rural development;
- use the special qualities of this National Park as a resource for community development and business opportunity ie the scenery, natural vegetation, wildlife and cultural heritage are an economic and community asset;
- make the National Park more accessible for more people including growing the tourism market;
- modernise and improve performance management systems;
- enhance our corporate governance;
- not provide services or activities which are performed more effectively by either the private, voluntary or other public sector organisations;
- look to enable external partners and third sector organisations to deliver our operational activities and create new businesses and jobs;
- work at the regional, national and international level to influence the direction and application of key policies; and
- implement new planning policies in partnership with local communities and businesses to deliver the new Vision.

We have also committed ourselves to more direct work and implementation and less plans, strategies and framework documents. Therefore we shall highlight this activity in order to manage a planned withdrawal from further plan and strategy development and limit our resource involvement to very high priority strategies.

The Progress in 2003/04

This is a time of tremendous opportunity and change for all those involved with the delivery of rural and public services and Northumberland National Park Authority has welcomed the opportunity to take advantage of the challenges ahead. We are working on a new agenda, putting sustainable development, which includes the local community and economy, at the heart of everything we do. A great deal has been achieved over the last 12 months and more is planned for the following 12 months. Yet sustainable progress is dependent upon government implementing the agreed fairer funding formula for national park authorities.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

The Authority, like all other English National Park Authorities, will be subject to a new form of independent assessment to replace the previous Best Value system. The new Comprehensive Performance Assessment scheme will be introduced in 2004/05. The Authority prepared for this by running a voluntary critical friend assessment in 2003/04. This will enable the staff and the Members to improve the overall performance of the Authority and to allocate resources to the most important areas of service provision.

Key Performance Areas

The Authority regularly monitors all its key areas of activity including high profile projects, Best Value Improvement Plans, its new Action Areas and key delivery areas. In 2003/04 the Authority's key performance indicators showed:

- **Excellent performance and improvement** in three areas: native woodland creation, use of the Hadrian's Wall Bus and volunteer activity.
- **Improvements** were made in other key areas including; planning services; responding to public letters; Biodiversity Action Plans and payment of invoices to our suppliers.

As expected, due to the huge redevelopment of all three Visitor Centres, the performance at the Visitor Centres declined. Three areas which require attention in 2004/05 were identified: namely to improve the usability of the Rights of Way network; improve the functionality of the new website and to look into issues surrounding the rise in staff sickness, even though it is still well below the average.

Financial Performance

2003/04 saw the Authority change the direction of the resources allocated to put a far greater emphasis on the new areas of working. The changeover has been a success with the Action Areas and Sustainable Development Fund earmarking all their resources to new projects. However, as these projects are usually community, business and partnership-led the actual defrayment of expenditure is taking longer to achieve than the orthodox top-down directional style of service delivery.

Spending and income were as planned with a few significant projects being delayed from 2003/04 into 2004/05, including the refurbishment of all three Visitor Centres, the 'traditional boundaries: traditional skills' project and planning service improvements.

Organisational Change

2003/04 saw the largest organisational change since the establishment of the Authority in 1997. A whole scale review of the staff's conditions of service was undertaken in order to provide more robust systems which provide the Authority with the staffing flexibility required to deliver the new Vision.

A system with 28 grading bands has been synthesised into one with just eight. Overtime and all other additional payments have been negotiated away in favour of more flexible working arrangements, including more flexible working hours, home working arrangements and mileage and subsistence payments aligned to Inland Revenue approved rates.

The project was undertaken jointly with the staff union, Unison, and was delivered on time and within the allocated budget.

Some real examples of the outcome of the new agenda were achieved and the following pages describe the detail.

Hadrian's Wall Bus

This year has been the best ever for Hadrian's Wall bus, with record levels of passengers and revenue. The results of the passenger survey show that passenger numbers were up by 36% and that people using the bus really value it. When asked how they rated the bus on a scale of 1 (poor) to 6 (excellent), the average score was 5. More than half the passengers using the bus used it specifically to walk the new Hadrian's Wall National Trail. The survey also found that 55% of people said they would not have made the trip without the bus and that nearly a quarter of passengers chose to use the bus rather than a car – great news for the environment! The service, which offers a low floor bus, with cycling carrying facilities, from Newcastle to Bowness on Solway, also received a Highly Commended award at the Bus Industry Awards.



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People Power in Falstone

Northumberland National Park Authority puts local people and the local community at the heart of what it does. The Authority's new way of working involves working much more closely with the local community through various means. The Sustainable Development Fund and Action Area funding are two examples of this. The Authority's new flagship development, Falstone Tearooms, is a prime example of how these funding streams are working together for the good of local people. When the Authority learned that the local village shop and tearooms in Falstone was closing and the building was being sold, it stepped into the breach and bought it. And there began a long journey that will result in the opening of a brand new shop, tearooms and community facility later in 2004. The refurbishment is expected to create a landmark building for the National Park with a 21st century design in a beautiful, traditional setting. Special sustainable energy features are prominent including using rain water captured from the roof to flush the public toilets and a new roof constructed from photovoltaic cells which convert the sun's rays into electricity. The Authority has worked very closely with the local community of Falstone throughout, consulting at every stage along the way.

Special Qualities Appreciated

Northumberland National Park's special qualities were praised in the Authority's first ever visitor survey on the area's landscape. The survey found that the landscape, peace and tranquillity were what visitors liked best about the area. The majority of those questioned considered Northumberland National Park to be more attractive than other areas of the countryside they had visited. The National Park's hills, woodlands, rivers, heather and grassland were appreciated along with the wide variety of landscape, colours, openness, unspoilt nature and spectacular views. This is the first step towards producing the Authority's first ever Landscape Strategy, which will ensure that the Authority is clear about what needs to be done to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.

Northumberland National Park Environment Association

The Association was re-launched at a prestigious event. This arms length body provides a means for the expertise and resources of the Authority to be made available to the communities living in the National Park and beyond. The intention of re-launching the Association was to empower it to seek out new practical projects, be at the forefront of community action and broaden the involvement of communities in and near the National Park. The Association will administer the National Park Authority's 'visitor payback' scheme, which involves asking visitors to the National Park to make a contribution to projects that benefit the environment. It also administers the Sustainable Development Fund, through an independent Grants Advisory Panel.

Biodiversity

Rare and beautiful flower-rich meadows have been restored using an innovative technique by the Authority and English Nature. Surveys have revealed that now, due to changes in the way the land is farmed, only about 30 flower-rich meadows remain in Northumberland National Park. The new technique harvests seed that could then be used to enrich nearby meadows. The pioneering work was carried out by attaching a seed harvester with nylon brushes to a tractor. This is the latest in a number of initiatives to improve the wildlife and habitats within the National Park and, in turn, increase people's enjoyment of this special place.



New Woodland Project in National Park

The National Park Authority is now a major player in an exciting new woodland management project described as being of 'considerable national significance'. The Authority joined forces with partners to help to protect valuable native woods. It will build up information on woods in the county, provide management advice to owners and managers and the chance to promote wood as a fuel to woodland owners.

New Walks For Rothbury and Coquetdale

The National Park Authority has been involved with some hugely successful walking leaflets for Rothbury and Coquetdale. Staff were approached by the Rothbury and Coquetdale Tourism Association and it was agreed to part fund the leaflets, which were produced by Country Walking magazine. The attractive booklet features a total of four walks from a strenuous nine mile hike to a relatively easy two hour stroll. The first print run of 60,000 ran out after only a matter of months!

The Kielder District Heating Scheme

A ground breaking £600,000 project to generate heating fuel from Kielder Forest's surplus woodchips received £50,000 from the Sustainable Development Fund. The project involves burning 250 tonnes of timber a year to provide heating for housing and community facilities in Kielder village. Six new housing association homes, the village school, youth hostel, Kielder Castle Visitor Centre and six workshops for local businesses are all benefiting from this green fuel plan. The project has provided cheaper and more sustainable fuel to the local community and also employment opportunities for local people. Environmental benefits of the project include the reduction of carbon emissions by 155 tonnes. The 250 tonnes of timber needed to fuel the system accounts for less than half a day's timber production at the forest.



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Volunteers : Biodiversity

Volunteers from Northumberland National Park Authority and Northumberland Wildlife Trust worked together to conserve an important mire in the Simonside Hills Site of Special Scientific Interest. The volunteers were working with staff on an English Nature funded project that involved building dams in drainage ditches to keep water on the mire (bog) to conserve the special plants and animals that live there. Keeping mires waterlogged helps protect the delicate peat habitat which has taken thousands of years to develop. Mires are one of the habitats which have been targeted for action under the Authority's Biodiversity Action Plan and are considered internationally important.

Volunteers: Walking Routes

More volunteers were recruited this year to help look after the hugely successful Hadrian's Wall Trail. As part of Northumberland National Park Authority's Volunteers Service, the 50 new recruits will play a key role in the trail's long term conservation. Each one will be responsible for monitoring between one and three miles of the path, ensuring that it is in good condition and litter free, and also helping protect Hadrian's Wall. They will also provide information to visitors.

Going Green for a Living

Businesses in and around Northumberland National Park are being encouraged to be more environmentally **. The 'Going Green for a Living' initiative involves supporting businesses who want to improve their environmental performance and helping them become 'champions' for the environment. Through this scheme businesses get the help and support they need, including an individual interview and overview of current business practice and potential for improvement. They then receive an action plan tailored to their own requirements. Six tourism businesses are already working to improve their environmental practices.

New Path across Military Training Area

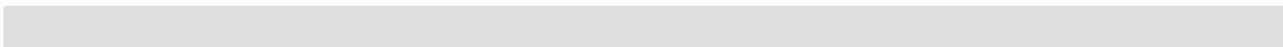
National Park Rangers worked with the RAF and MoD to help improve access on the Otterburn Training Area. A group of RAF Aircrew Cadets helped the Ranger Service on a project to create part of a new path by building stiles, clearing woodland and moor vegetation and building steps. When complete, this permissive path will provide safe access for the public and it will be clearly waymarked to prevent walkers from straying into any dangerous areas. The new path was initiated by Ministry of Defence Area as part of their on-going commitment towards improving access on the Otterburn ranges.

National Park's Historic Villages take the Limelight

An innovative project aimed at stimulating interest in National Park's historic villages took off this year. Local communities were well and truly involved in the project through a series of on-going public meetings. The Historic Village Atlas project, funded by the National Park Authority's Sustainable Development Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund, will reveal how 17 historic village settlements in the National Park have evolved over the centuries. The project is expected to culminate in July 2004 with a document that will help planning decisions and act as a baseline from which further study, understanding and enjoyment of the historic villages might be developed by interested community based groups.

Archaeology Book

A new book about archaeology in the National Park was launched by the Duke of Northumberland. The National Park has some of the country's finest but least understood archaeological landscapes and the book, *Archaeology in Northumberland National Park*, which was published by the Council for British Archaeology, is a celebration of these. It includes the first published results of a number of recent surveys and excavations which have taken place in the National Park. This book summarises an enormous amount of fascinating work that has been undertaken by many people over two centuries, with special emphasis on projects in Northumberland National Park during the past decade. It demonstrates the exceptional quality of the National Park's archaeological landscapes, but also the fact that the surface has only just begun to be scratched.



Budget Summary 2004/05

Central government provides the Authority with an annual grant to cover the costs of running the Authority. This is **£2.5m** in 2004/05, which is a standstill settlement compared to the previous year and it is still the lowest government grant given to any National Park Authority in England and Wales. This historical situation does not reflect our need and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Office of Deputy Prime Minister have re-examined the situation and concluded that Northumberland National Park Authority is at least £600,000 under-funded relative to a standard formula for funding National Park Authorities. This builds on the government commitment to raising the quality of management of all National Park Authorities to that of the best (Rural White Paper, November 2000). So in 2004/05 the Authority has the following resources available:

Resources Available	Budget
Core Government Funding	£2,502,000
Income Generated	£201,000
Sustainable Development Fund	£200,000
Implementing Electronic Government Grant	£300,000
Planning Delivery Grant	£157,000
External Grant Aid Secured	£762,000
Funding from Capital Receipts	£35,000
Transfer from Balances	£1,095,000
Total Source Resources	£5,252,000

The Authority has reacted to the inadequate government funding by generating its own income, realising capital receipts, attracting external grant for its priorities and applying all of its unallocated reserves to work programmes. The previous table shows that the Authority relies on external grant and income generation for its core purpose work in conservation, recreation and public enjoyment. The large amounts of external grant in the areas of cultural heritage, recreation and forward planning are due to the Authority's success in leveraging in Lottery, Regional Development Agency, European Union, business and voluntary sector funding for major projects such as:

- Discovering Our Hillfort Heritage;
- Sustainable Tourism;
- Sustainable Transport;
- Cultural Heritage initiatives; and
- Environmental education.

Unfortunately the current Objective 2 European programmes offer far less funding for Northumberland National Park compared with the previous Objective 5(b) regime. The Authority is very pleased that the Government's new Sustainable Development Fund has in part reduced that deficit and the Authority has warmly welcomed the performance related Implementing Electronic Government and Planning Delivery Grant initiatives both of which are enabling step change improvements in service delivery.

For 2004/05 the budget resources are to be spent as follows:

External Grant Aided Projects	£1,781,000
Staffing Related Costs	£2,102,000
Overheads	£792,000
Revenue and Capital Works	£577,000
Total Use of Resources for 2004/05	£5,252,000

This shows that the Authority's ongoing costs (staff and overheads) are £2.9million compared to the government approved budget allocation of £2.5million. Even with income generation of about £200,000 pa, **the Authority is effectively running at a £200,000 deficit**. The Authority is, as external auditors have commented for over six years, heavily reliant on external grant aid to support its programmes of work.

In addition to the annual budget the Authority also has the following resources:

- 65 staff (full time equivalents);
- 103 Northumberland National Park Voluntary Rangers;
- 52 Hadrian's Wall National Trail Volunteers;
- £1.9m of fixed assets; and
- 3 Visitor Centres (one operating as a 'Park House' integrating community, business and visitor centre functions), 20 historic sites, 34 car parking facilities, 8 toilet blocks, a community shop and tea room, and a head office.

The Authority does not own significant areas of the National Park - less than 1% of the 400 square mile area of the National Park is owned by the Authority.

The Plan for 2004/05

The Financial Plan

The Authority has set a base budget based on the standstill settlement from Government, this has enabled the Authority to maintain its level of funding to the new priorities of sustainable development, action areas and an external financed project programme in excess of £1million. In addition, the Authority has committed itself to use all of its unallocated revenue reserves to accelerate its programme of corporate improvements and deliver on all the initiatives delayed in 2003/04.

Improving the Way We Work

As a result of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, including the independent Peer Review, the Authority has set-up six Comprehensive Improvement Programmes. Each requires a number of key projects for their delivery.

1. Promoting Integrated Delivery

Improve Action Area delivery by creating new ways of working, structures, learning mechanisms and allocating additional resources. Focus will be placed on:

- the creation of whole action area solutions;
- developing a new set of planning policies from the grassroots upwards in a way which engaging the local communities and businesses whilst delivering the National Park's Vision;
- delivering more private sector and third sector involvement in the running of the Authority's operations and delivering community action;
- improving project management through training and development, new systems of project assessment and reporting including ICT improvements; and
- creating a learning organisation – one which celebrates and builds on success and recognises failures and learns from the experience.

This may mean the creation of a new team to deliver this Improvement Programme.

2. Setting Priorities and Improving Performance Management

This programme will enable the Authority to better fit resources (staff, annual budgets, information and capital assets) to priorities. Clear and simple systems will be introduced to set, monitor and review performance.

3. Organisational Review – next stage

Having reformed our employment practices we will now move onto the issue of changing from an organisation which is focussed on expertise to one which focuses on the delivery of integrated solutions, outputs and the management of resources. We will set our organisation's values, review corporate roles and responsibilities, and place a greater emphasis on performance management. At this period of change we will implement solutions which improve the management of the change, including increasing all our managers' skills in the areas of human resource and financial management. In addition, we will look to outstation more staff in the National Park area.

4. Modernising systems

We will deliver projects which simplify our systems, reduce the dependency on paper and process and largely eliminate the need for further strategies and plans. This will create more transparent decision making, increase accountability, make more information accessible and improve internal and external communications.

To achieve these results we will install document management and linked customer relation management solutions, launch a public planning website and a staff and member intranet (local web site).

5. Improved Communications

We will move from broad communications to more focussed communications with internal and external customers. This will reduce the volume of meetings and eliminate areas of unproductive liaison.

6. Improve Arrangements for Governance

Firstly, we need to formalise the existing effective member working patterns ie those of the roles of the full Authority, Management Group and Review Panel. We also need to improve decision making arrangements by aligning Lead Member portfolios to match the Vision themes; revise our constitution (Standing Orders) and allocate specific roles to specific members where their interests and skills set determine. We will also actively train and develop members and staff with skills to undertake new roles.

Specific Service Improvements

The Authority has an effective mechanism for reviewing all its business critical work areas. Currently, a top level review of future priorities is being concluded and this will create a set of priorities to be addressed from October 2004 onwards in the areas of:

- a. recovery of biodiversity
- b. landscape enhancement
- c. town and country planning
- d. enabling a broader range of people to enjoy the Park

To date a number of business critical areas have been identified for improvement. In particular:

- Improving the usability of the Rights of Way network;
- Embedding sustainable tourism across all work areas;
- E-enabling all our public transactions; and
- Improving the planning service.

These specific service improvements will each be delivered by an identifiable improvement project.

The Bid for 2005/06

Short Term Budget Strategy

Nationally, we are working towards developing a more sensible medium-term financial planning regime. In its absence the Authority has made a shorter-term, one-year only bid for £1 million. This is realistic in the sense that we could spend this level of funding wisely in the short-term. If fulfilled, the new funds will enable us to make effective progress in delivering the government's priorities.

The following analysis shows how the Authority is using the substantial new funds provided by government to meet their nine current priorities for National Parks and identifies the areas still requiring additional funding.

1) Bid £195,000 - Contribute to and prepare for the implementation of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, in particular by establishing local access forums and preparing for increased access to open countryside

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires the Authority to plan for enabling access to as much as 62,000 ha, i.e. 250 square miles of land over which the public will have a new freedom of access. This is a substantial proportion of the national target. We are very experienced in this area of work and our bid is evidence based and very realistic. Open access will need to be managed in a way that derives optimum benefit to the public while minimising disturbance to land managers. Substantial new funds are required to complete the final practical preparation and to implement the new access provided by the new legislation.

2) Bid £70,000 - Identify the demand for a full range of sporting and other recreational activities and consider to what extent these may be accommodated

Northumberland National Park is under-utilised by recreational users. The Authority requires significant new funds to meet the regional and national user needs. Our National Park's economic and recreational potential is not being fully realised.

Tourism is a major component of our rural economy. We will develop tourism and weave together conservation of the resource and ownership by the local communities to benefit the local economy. A key initiative, working with and through local communities, is the development and marketing of high profile challenge events and a range of walking, cycling and riding packages, which raise the profile of the National Park as a destination and its special qualities. These events and packages will be designed to attract increased numbers of both day visitors and staying visitors. A number of micro-businesses will directly benefit from this new activity.

3) Bid £200,000 - Encourage greater use of and interest in National Parks by all sections of society, especially people with disabilities, people from ethnic minorities, the inner cities and young people

Northumberland National Park is close to the deprived urban areas of Newcastle, Gateshead, Tyneside, South-East Northumberland and Wearside but we are unable to assist in meeting key government priorities because of under funding. We would like to engage with our potential urban audiences in a comprehensive and meaningful way. We are proud of the many short-term initiatives which we have explored, often in partnership with others. This experience leaves us in no doubt that a significant injection of funds is necessary to fully reposition what the National Park has to offer; to have a wider audience appeal with special emphasis on young people from both urban and rural areas. A proactive approach to greater accessibility is critical. Current funding allows only experimental action around the edges. Additional funding is an immediate priority if a step change in performance is to be achieved. Our key initiative would be a wide ranging, externally operated programme of experiential activity based events, principally targeting young people. Barriers to participation e.g. access to transport and equipment, would be identified and removed through the project.

4) Bid £200,000 - Support agricultural and other land management projects which promote National Park purposes, working in partnership with the Government Office for the North East, the Countryside Agency, Forest Enterprise and other organisations where appropriate. In particular, ensure full use is made of the England Rural Development Plan

Northumberland National Park is the most open, sparsely populated and least “managed” national park in England. This presents a unique opportunity for the nation. We will work with partners on a major 'wildspace' initiative, which builds on existing activities and partnerships but delivers a wider and more radical set of outputs. 'Wildspace' will create more wild space for plants and animals in our National Park, allow them to adapt to factors such as climate change and provide opportunities for physical and spiritual refreshment. A range of public and private sector funding will be used to resource an initial five year project based on securing landscape scale benefits for species, habitats and people.

'Wildspace' will both restore existing habitats and create new ones, building on a number of 'core areas' such as ancient woodlands. In creating new habitats, such as upland hay meadows, innovative new techniques will be explored and tested. A key part of the approach will be to develop increasing economic activity based on the environment.

5) Bid £175,000 - Support sustainable rural development projects, especially those for sustainable tourism

The Authority has concluded that we need to significantly increase the number of visitors to Northumberland National Park since tourism is an economic lifeline for our communities. We need additional resources to work with our regional partners to invest in branding, marketing and repositioning the National Park as a visitor destination, both nationally and in the region. We need to invest in, and so reposition, our National Park Visitor Centres to ensure that they act as our 'shop windows' and deliver new services that meet the needs of our visitors and local residents.

Linking with a range of partners, we must promote the use of a strong brand image of the National Parks. We must make direct connection to sustainable development and biodiversity, by example through developing public transport links and walking, cycling and horse riding packages, and through the promotion of local products as part of a new high quality visitor experience.

The development of a new innovative tourism product linked to the strong National Park brand image is the challenge facing National Parks. Visitor interest in sustainability will be encouraged by making what is worthy both enjoyable and entertaining. The activity starts from a low base and so requires extensive resources over a period of years. Innovative ways of promoting linked initiatives such as visitor payback and joint ticketing would be integrated into the approach.

Promotional material will be prepared and disseminated in print, on websites and on sites within the region. Exhibition and promotional material will also be prepared for use in public venues, information centres, travel fairs and urban centres in the UK and abroad. The expertise of Visit Britain, Tourist Boards and partners would be used in preparation of this material.

6) Bid £30,000 - Seek corporately and individually to develop and promote Lottery schemes to support National Park purposes

The Authority has achieved much success in raising external contributions in the past, including Lottery funding. However, this activity has proven an administrative burden and been carried out at the expense of other activity. It has also tended towards the ad hoc, as particular opportunities have arisen. The Authority needs to develop a more planned approach in the form

of a Lottery Strategy to include local community aspirations. Funds are sought for the appointment of a pilot Lottery and Grants Officer.

7) Bid £60,000 - Continue to develop and implement innovative approaches to integrated traffic management and public transport issues, combined with education and information about the need for such approaches

Transport provision underlies our approach to sustainable tourism and community development. We are proud of our pioneering work on the Hadrian's Wall Bus – an award winning scheme, one which is aimed largely at the visitor, but only serves a small area of the Park. We actively support the rural transport partnerships and with additional resources can roll out the expertise gained on Hadrian's Wall by developing wider packages of sustainable transport options for tourists, day visitors and local people throughout the Park. Our track record with the Hadrian's Wall Bus demonstrates that we can both develop and deliver innovative solutions. The key focus for activity is developing and marketing transport packages focussed on the gateway towns of Rothbury and Wooler.

8) Bid £50,000 - Work corporately and individually in order to progress the state of the park indicators and visitor numbers work, as important contributing information to the management of the Parks

The Authority needs accurate and up-to-date information to ensure that our operations and those of others are effective and enable us to manage improvement programmes and monitor policy changes. For example, additional funding would allow us to undertake:

- visitor surveys to monitor visitor numbers, characteristics, aspirations and behaviour;
- data gathering, through satellite imagery, use of counters and ground survey to update information on landscape, habitats, species, archaeological sites and traffic flows throughout the Park;
- tranquillity mapping; and
- collate and utilise relevant data from other agencies and business networks.

9) Bid £20,000 - Develop closer working at political and practical levels between National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in particular fully participate in the influencing initiative to promote the value of England's protected landscapes to a variety of audiences

Protected areas cover over one third of the North East Region. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires Management plans for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Authority would use additional funds to work closely with the North Northumberland Coast and North Pennines Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to prepare an integrated strategy for the Region to further joint objectives.

Summary

Bid for 2005/06	£1,000,000
1) Open Access	£195,000
2) Improved recreational use	£70,000
3) Improved accessibility: "access for all"	£200,000
4) Innovative land management project	£200,000
5) Sustainable rural development	£175,000
6) External funding promotion	£30,000
7) Sustainable transport	£60,000
8) State of the Park monitoring	£50,000
9) Working with Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	£20,000

Aims, Objectives, Achievements and Future Activities by Theme

We have concluded that the best way to achieve National Park purposes in Northumberland is by putting the economy and community at the heart of our work. We aim to work with the community and partners to achieve National Park purposes and build a more sustainable economy, one grounded in the special qualities of this National Park, notably the unspoilt natural beauty, tranquillity and cultural inheritance.

Our Themed Objectives are:

A Proactive, Forward Looking and Innovative Authority

The Authority's objective is to become an enabling authority, one which engages in productive partnerships and is proactive and outward looking ie less regulation and less administration.

Our objective is to create effective practical working with local communities and businesses as the best way to deliver sustainable development. We will do this by working through Action Areas in partnership with the local community and district councils.

We have concluded that in order to deliver a different service we need to change the way we work. We will redirect and develop new staff competencies and make maximum use of new technology to assist this change programme. We do not currently aim to restructure departmentally but to improve our ways of working. We will review the structure later.

We aim to:

- Implement the Vision through area plans and practical projects integrating social, economic and environmental goals;
- To reach out across the boundary of the National Park for effective working on social and economic opportunities and to protect the setting of the Park;
- To ensure that rural development is recognised as a core activity;
- Optimise the use of our facilities, financial and staff resources for rural development;
- Give access to our data and information systems to a wider community.

Activity identified for 2003/04	Actual Result in 2003/04
Prioritise new electronic services to areas which are customer focused e.g. interactive website, improved remote access at the Visitor Centres and partake in the national planning portal	New Website launched and remote access improved at one of the three Visitor Centres. Planning website not started.
Provide agenda, minutes and reports for all the Authority meetings on the web-site	Documents available on the web but in an incomplete format.
Organise two National Park best practice in sustainable tourism development seminars,	One delivered
Provide 10 Ranger Team days to a programme of skills exchange on sustainable management techniques of the Hadrian's Wall National Trail.	Successfully completed including grass restoration, sustainable path management techniques and earth work management.
Implement the annual actions detailed in the Corporate Communications Strategy	Actions largely achieved; independently scrutinised by the Review Panel.
Promote the key messages identified in the Communications Strategy to target audiences	Key messages communicated via the media to target audiences. Communication to target audiences still to be developed.

Activity identified for 2003/04	Actual Result in 2003/04
Seek an independent assessment of the Authority's Members allowance scheme (carried over from 2002/03)	Abandoned as new legislation dictated that a nationally developed scheme be introduced in January 2004. This was achieved.
Publicise and implement the Authority's Freedom of Information Act 2000 Publication Scheme	Freedom of Information Publication Scheme published. Act comes into operation from January 2005.
Re-tender the cleansing contract for Hadrian's Wall sites and grounds maintenance contracts Park wide (carried over from 2002/03)	Grounds maintenance tendered for Wark Forest area. Contracts for Hadrian's Wall sites and site grounds not achieved
Deliver payroll service in-house to reduce costs.	Delivered on time with cost savings.
Focus training resources on providing staff with new competencies to deliver new Vision.	Training resources have been focussed but delivery has lagged behind.
Maintain the Investors In People award	Achieved.
Review and improve the staff appraisal process	Achieved.
Plans and Strategies	
Start to implement work / life balance practices	Work/life balance is an integral part of appraisals and a draft policy framework has been developed.
Align the aims, indicators and actions in this Corporate Plan more closely to the National Park Management Plan	This Corporate Plan has been structured to the themes of the Vision.
Publish Topic Papers to take forward the National Park Management Plan at a policy level (carried over from 2002/03)	All Topic Papers have been completed and signed off by the Authority. Some will now be the subject of promotion with Stakeholders. All will now be used to create work programmes.
Begin annual monitoring of the State of the Park indicators	Seven State of the Park indicators were published in the 2003/04 Best Value Performance Plan.

Key Indicators	Actual 02/03	Target 03/04	Actual 03/04	Target 04/05	Target 05/06	5 Year Target
Types of interactions that are enabled for electronic delivery (%)	45.56	66.00	58.89	84.00	100.00	100.00
Financial value of external partnerships led by Authority (£million)	0.7	1.1	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0
Average time to answer public letters (days)	7.6	3	4.1	5	5	5

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Key Corporate Improvements

- Performance management and the alignment of resources to priorities. Including:
 - Use personalised targets in staff appraisals to show how performance contributes to the Vision.

- Project management – continue with the development of performance monitoring framework, project manage more areas of work and improve the financial reporting system.
 - Access new funds via the Authority's new capital borrowing powers.
 - Develop monitoring of performance management targets as set out in National Park Management Plan.
 - Develop State of the Park Monitoring indicators and establish baseline data.
2. Organisational review to make us fitter for purpose, including:
- Develop the work/life balance framework, revise flexi-leave and home-working policies to benefit both the Authority and the workforce.
 - Retain the Investors in People Award at the current level
 - Replace the current car leasing scheme.
 - Revise Ranger Team working arrangements as highlighted in the Ranger Strategy
3. Modernisation through the use of ICT, including:
- Role out the European Computer Driving License training
 - Install Document Management and Customer Relationship Management systems, allowing: creation of virtual teams, one stop shop, work flow and collaborative working
 - Updating network infrastructure to allow improved communications by providing greater bandwidth
 - Enabling video conferences between offices, key contacts, and remote staff
 - Enabling web cam infrastructure
 - Providing the necessary building blocks to enable home working, providing improvements to work-life balance.
4. More focussed communications so that our stakeholders understand what we are trying to do and how they can assist.
- Initiate process to ensure all representatives of the Authority are effective and consistent in their communications with others, particularly engaging Members in communicating with target audiences and providing a customer focused approach to project development.
 - Develop targeted communication tools to reach residents, businesses and local community groups and stakeholders.
5. Governance and management: refinements to decision making, and structural and cultural issues but also including new ways of working derived from electronic government and community planning initiatives.
- Document and codify the way committees and panels operate to ensure continuity of approach and operation if personnel change.
 - Produce local job descriptions for Members with Special Responsibilities, in addition to work being undertaken on generic job descriptions by the Association of National Park Authorities.

- Review Standing Orders relating to the Authority as part of the overall review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations being carried out by the Monitoring Officer
- Increase the active engagement of Members and make greater use of their expertise, both local and subject specific, in new projects undertaken by the Authority and to drive forward key policies.
- Ensure systems in place for the implementation of access to information measures coming into force in January 2005, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Other Proposed Actions for 2004/05

Develop, implement and monitor an approved recycling/reuse/disposal scheme.

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Plans and Strategies

1. Aim to influence use of integrated EU funds via the North Sea Interreg Programme (2007 to 2013) by working with transnational colleagues to produce a sustainable tourism strategy which will influence national and regional policy as well as the direction of future EU funds. Our aim is to create a strategy which places an area's special qualities at the heart of tourism development and prioritising integrated working between communities and businesses.

A Living Landscape: Sustainable Land Use in the National Park

We believe that the future of this National Park lies in maintaining and enhancing its special qualities; that includes keeping it as a living, working landscape. We want to retain the tranquillity, the openness and the moorland character, the unspoilt nature of the area and to conserve wildlife habitats and species. As farming is the most dominant land use at some 80% of the land cover our objective is to influence the local application of new EU farm subsidies to ensure their application delivers national park aims, unlike previous subsidy regimes which were often in conflict.

Forestry covers about 20% of the National Park and the abundance of non-native coniferous forests have been created largely as a result of the previous policy, taxation and grant incentives. Forestry policy and fiscal reform removed in 1988 has created new opportunities to produce forests which meet National Park aims. Our objective is to modify existing forests and woodlands to better fit Northumberland National Park's landscape.

Activity identified for 2003/04	Actual Result in 2003/04
Ensure that projects are developed, through Action Areas, the Sustainable Tourism project and the Sustainable Development Fund, that benefit biodiversity and advocate the development of integrated sustainable land management projects	Two projects which benefit biodiversity have been completed in the North Tyne Action Area and one in Hadrian's Wall. A number of community based biodiversity initiatives are underway. Three biodiversity based Sustainable Tourism projects have been developed.
Work closely with the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to provide improved performance information on agri-environmental and rural development schemes	DEFRA's local Rural Development Service team has begun to provide more useful performance information. However, we still experience delays in this area of work.

Actively participate in the review of agri-environmental schemes for England and Wales, including the Entry Level Upland Pilot	The Authority was fully represented on the Entry Level Upland Pilot Advisory Group and through Association of National Park Authorities on the National Entry level Pilot Group and at a national level for the Agri-environmental Review
Provide advice to at least 10 farms regarding options for agri-environmental schemes and, where appropriate, assist with applications to Countryside Stewardship, thus leveraging in significant government funding to increase the area of land managed in line with the Authority's conservation objectives	Advice was given to 15 farmers on the renewal of Countryside Stewardship schemes and at least 23 farmers considering new schemes.
Assess 15 farms for the renewal of Countryside Stewardship agreements and assist with applications where a new agreement will deliver benefits in line with the Authority's conservation objectives	All completed.
In partnership with English Nature, the National Trust and the Countryside Agency deliver the first full year of the '21 st Century Drovers' Project, exploring the use of traditional hill breeds of cattle for the management of sites of conservation interest	First year of Project delivered; cattle grazed an important site producing positive effects upon the vegetation, interesting cultural information gathered and interpretive material produced.
Work in partnership with Lilburn Estates and the Game Conservancy Trust to deliver the second year of a major project, to assess the value of using commercial suckler cattle in the control of <i>molinia caerulea</i> on heather moorland	Lilburn Estates unfortunately withdrew from the Project because of concerns regarding trampling by cattle of grouse nests. Evidence for trampling did exist but this was thought to be more than made up for by the positive effects upon the vegetation.
Assist at least 10 businesses with applications for grant aid under the England Rural Development Programme to deliver innovative schemes that will provide both environmental and economic benefits and contribute to sustainable land management	Successfully delivered in conjunction with DEFRA. One scheme was used as a flagship to highlight the development of projects that integrated the land-based and project-based funding under the EU Regional Development Programme to national DEFRA officers.
Plans and Strategies	
Begin implementation of a Geological Strategy for the National Park in collaboration with English Nature and the British Geological Survey	In progress.
Undertake the production of a conservation strategy for the central section of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site on behalf of English Heritage, as an example of best practice for the rest of the World Heritage Site (carried over from 2002/03)	Comments have been past on a draft document provided by English Heritage but they have now put the strategy on hold.
Develop a Landscape Strategy for Northumberland National Park	Limited progress.

Indicator	Actual 02/03	Target 03/04	Actual 03/04	Target 04/05	Target 05/06	5 Year Target
% Area of the Park covered by Countryside Stewardship agreements	48	49	45.05			55
Total area of forest managed in-line with National Park objectives (ha)	2632	2750	4312.23			

Our Management Plan aims are by December 2005 to have:

- **1 large area initiative demonstrating integrated land management;**
- **60% of farm holdings in some form of agri-environment scheme; and**
- **15 businesses having been successful in gaining farm diversification grants.**

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Key Corporate Improvements

1. Integrated delivery, community engagement and enabling community enterprise. Including
 - Create new projects through Action Areas, the Sustainable Tourism project and the Sustainable Development Fund to benefit biodiversity
 - Develop two sustainable diversification of farm land use projects through the Sustainable Development Fund.
 - Test local integrated delivery mechanisms for the new Agri-Environment Schemes in partnership with the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs Rural Development Service and English Nature staff.

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Other Improvements

1. Complete Phase 1 of The Drovers Project.
2. Work with Forest Enterprise to ensure that the state owned forests in the National Park are managed in ways which effectively meet the Northumberland National Park Authority's Vision and statutory purposes. (S 62)

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Plans and Strategies

1. Deliver the key components of the National Park Landscape Assessment to inform preparation of the Strategy.
2. Prepare and begin implementation of a new strategy for the Authority's largest landholding at Greenlee and Stonefolds, which involves local universities and demonstrates good practice.
3. Set up a Land Manager's Forum for the National Park.
4. Develop a geodiversity action plan with partners and complete an audit of geological features in the Northumberland National Park.
5. Work jointly with Ministry of Defence to develop a Strategic Estate Plan for the Otterburn Training Area
6. Produce a 99 year management plan for Thirlwall Castle and continue implementation of management works.

A Landscape Rich in Biodiversity

Northumberland National Park ***as 161 rare and significant species. Our objective is maintain and enhance the internationally and nationally important habitats and species that occur in the area by engaging, not just consulting but actively involving, the local community and businesses such as tourism enterprises.

As woodland is a critical factor we will aim to create significant areas of new native woodlands and develop business opportunities for the use of wood as a sustainable economic commodity.

Activity identified for 2003/04	Actual Result in 2003/04
Carry out essential management of 50 ha of woodland covered by legal agreements ensuring their contribution to the landscape and biodiversity of the National Park.	Management works implemented in more than 100 ha of woodland covered by legal agreement.
Increase biodiversity through the creation of 200 ha of new native woodland through the final year of the New Native Woodland Challenge Scheme.	Additional native woodland totalling 252.22 ha was planted using grant aid and by Forest Enterprise.
Increase the benefits for biodiversity from Countryside Stewardship Schemes and seek to secure the best management for biodiversity of publicly owned land.	Work on hay meadows is in progress. Work is underway with Forest Enterprise and the Ministry of Defence to improve management of their land for biodiversity. Over 30 tenanted farms on Ministry of Defence land have ***to entered Countryside Stewardship Schemes.
Work with English Nature to ensure that all Special Areas of Conservation, National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the National Park are in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable improving' condition – Special Areas by 2006 and others by 2012	Work is progressing with English Nature. A number of new Wildlife Enhancement Schemes have been offered by English Nature. The Countryside Stewardship Scheme has also been used in some cases in collaboration with DEFRA.
Ensure Planning Applications and other developments comply with the law relating to protected species and seek opportunities where possible to enhance understanding of these species and their requirements in terms of habitat	Delivered. Plus efforts have been made to enhance the understanding of the species and their requirements in terms of habitat.
Work with partners to develop externally funded projects to take forward biodiversity work particularly the work that has already started in relation to Black Grouse and the Border Mires and new work on hay meadows	We are working with partners to develop an externally funded North Northumberland Black Grouse project and also a North of England Red Squirrel project. Work on the Border mires is continuing and a bid for a hay meadow project will be prepared in 2004-5.
Continue to encourage the removal of unsightly conifer blocks in order to enhance the landscape	Unsightly conifer blocks have been removed in the College Valley and by the Ministry of Defence in the Grasslees Valley and at Huel Crag.

In partnership with DEFRA and the landowners complete two management plans for 6,191 ha of important moorland habitat linked to Countryside Stewardship agreements and ****	The two management plans are still to complete due to lack of staff resources.
Plans and Strategies	
Seek resources to enable the production of management plans for semi-natural woodlands covered by legal agreements	The Northumberland Native Woodland Project has been set up jointly with partners. Survey and assessment carried out in all S39 and SSSI woods and management statements produced.
Write four Species Action Plans / Species Statements and continue implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan, Habitat Action Plans and Species Action Plans to ensure that annual targets are met, a priority will be to take forward work on hay meadows	One habitat action plan, one species statement and three species action plans were written. Implementation of plans continues with the majority of annual targets being met. Work began on hay meadows with seed collection taking place for reseeded trials next season. Soil testing carried out on potential sites for reseeded.
Research and survey habitats and species linked with the implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan. Agree priorities with English Nature and collaborate on monitoring of change to enhance our understanding of management methods	Two detailed surveys were carried out of lichens and bryophytes. Woodland surveys were carried out as part of the Northumberland Native woodland project. Some baseline monitoring of hay meadows and Greater Sundew on mires was undertaken to enable change to be monitored.
Complete the transfer of environmental records onto Recorder software and continue data entry to ensure these records are up-to-date and accessible	Some of the records have been transferred but a backlog of data still exists.
Produce guidance on moorland burning programmes for other agreement sites	Guidance on moorland burning programmes is provided and the Authority is working closely with English Nature to develop common policies and best practice guidance.

Indicator	Actual 02/03	Target 03/04	Actual 03/04	Target 04/05	Target 05/06	5 Year Target
Area of new native woodland created (ha)	83	100	252.22	100	100	1,000
% of Biodiversity Action Plans completed	48	84	72	72	84	100

Our Management Plan aims are by December 2005 to have:

- **7,500ha more of upland health in good management;**
- **Create 1,000ha of new native woodland since 1995;**

- **63% of the National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest in favourable or improving condition;**
- **100ha of conifer plantation removed to allow restoration of semi-natural habitats.**

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Other Improvements

1. Implement work to meet actions in the species and habitat action plans. Seek external resources for an upland hay meadow project and continue with current seed collection and reseeding work. Participate in regional partnership projects for black grouse and red squirrel.
2. Work with English Nature to ensure more of the priority areas are in favourable or improving condition. Also target the new agri-environmental schemes to deliver improvements to the condition of these areas.
3. Increase biodiversity through the creation of 100 hectares of new native woodland through the final year of the Forestry Commission's New Native Woodland Challenge Scheme and through Forestry Commission Woodland Grant Schemes.
4. Carry out essential management of 50 hectares of woodland covered by legal agreements ensuring ****
5. Obtain external resources for a woodland project to carry forward the management recommendations which have come out of the Northumberland Native Woodland project.
6. Continue to encourage the removal of unsightly conifer blocks in order to enhance the landscape.
7. Continue to take appropriate action when dealing with Planning Applications when requested.
8. Continue to increase the benefits for biodiversity from new agri-environment schemes and seek to secure the best management for biodiversity of publicly owned land
9. Implement practical management prescriptions over Simonside and Harbottle Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Plans and Strategies

1. Continue with biological data entry on the Recorder system and ensure records are up to date and accessible.

A Rich Cultural Heritage

Northumberland National Park is one of the most important historic landscapes in Britain and we have only just begun to explore it. By cultural heritage we include both the physical remains, left to us by past societies, and the living inheritance of the local people – their language, traditions, folklore, skills and knowledge. There is great local pride in this inheritance.

Our objective is to work in area based partnerships to widen our collective knowledge of the area's heritage for the benefit of local communities and visitors alike.

Activity identified for 2003/04	Actual Result in 2003/04
Complete the Discovering our Hillfort Heritage phase II, including the refurbishment of the Ingram National Park Centre to celebrate the archaeology of the Cheviots (carried over from 2002/03)	Progress has been made, but the Discovering Our Hillforts Heritage project has been extended until December 2004. All work is on target for the new date.
Complete the Historic Village Atlas, in	Largely completed, but project granted an

Activity identified for 2003/04	Actual Result in 2003/04
conjunction with local communities.	extension until July 2004.
Develop and acquire funding for a large scale initiative at Yeavinger to follow on from Discovering our Hillfort Heritage	In progress.
Conserve the remains of Hareshaw Dam (a scheduled ancient monument) with English Heritage	Plans completed. Works outstanding.
Publish a major new popular book about the archaeology of the National Park	'Archaeology in Northumberland National Park' was launched at Alnwick Castle in April 2004.
Commence an externally funded project to research traditional boundaries.	Project commenced and in progress.
Develop partnerships with organisations and individuals to celebrate the special qualities of the National Park through cultural activity	Achieved in parts of the National Park and for parts of the huge historic cultural legacy in Northumberland National Park.
Plans and Strategies	
Complete the Authority's archaeological research agenda	Drafted and consultation in progress.

Indicator	Actual 02/03	Target 03/04	Actual 03/04	Target 04/05	Target 05/06	5 Year Target
Area of archaeological landscape surveyed (ha.)	50	1700	20	1,700	16,000	25,000
No. of heritage sites newly interpreted and opened to the public	10	2	0	3	3	10
Number of listed buildings at risk rescued through NPA action during the year as a percentage of the total number of listed buildings at risk.	n/a	10%	0	25%	0	25%

Our Management Plan aims are by December 2005 to have:

- **60% of the National Park covered by archaeological air photographic survey;**
- **10 new research initiatives to inform a better understanding and management of the cultural heritage;**
- **6,950ha of heritage sites under archaeological management agreements;**
- **24 heritage sites / trails promoted to the public (excluding outside the Hadrian's Wall site);**
- **5 communities with a detailed historic record of their local area;**
- **3 new initiatives based on local culture and traditions supported by the Authority.**

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Key Corporate Improvements

1. Integrated delivery, community engagement and enabling community enterprise, including:

- Complete project planning phase for a major community led project based around Yeavinger hillfort and palace;
- Start the scheme development process for an area based cultural heritage and traditions project in the North Tyne and Redesdale area.

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Other Improvements

1. Enhance Ingram Visitor Centre with interactive interpretation and education including the Hillfort Heritage interpretation projects.
2. Support one new initiative based on local culture and traditions.
3. Facilitate one community in producing a detailed historic record of their local area.
4. Successfully consolidate Hareshaw Dam.
5. Complete and implement an historic sites inspection and management programme.
6. Delivery of Historic Village Atlas project in association with local communities and development of local groups, and development and follow up projects.
7. Pilot Community Archaeology project in Coquetdale.

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Plans and Strategies

1. Begin the first phase of research to create a Cultural Bibliography.
2. Agree an Accord and Joint Action Plan with English Heritage.
3. Deliver the first Archaeological Research Agenda for the National Park.

A True Sense of Tranquillity

In a small, crowded island tranquillity is a rare commodity. Its appeal to a largely urban society also represents a substantial economic asset for this National Park and its economy. As tranquillity is *the* special quality above all others, which defines the character of Northumberland National Park it is our aim to resist undesirable developments, especially intrusive development in open country

Activity identified for 2003/04	Actual Result in 2003/04
Prepare, adopt and publish an Enforcement Strategy	Prepared. Awaiting Government's review of enforcement before adopting and publishing.

Our Management Plan aims are by December 2005 to have:

- **Developed a method to assess tranquillity and any changes to it.**

Proposed Actions for 2004/05

- Ensure that the Tranquillity Project leads to the preparation of the first Tranquillity Map for the National Park.
- Await for the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs ****. Address the issues regarding the use of mechanically propelled vehicles on Rights of Way in the Cheviot Hills with partner organisations following revised guidance from the DEFRA.

Opportunities for all to Understand, Enjoy and Contribute to the Special Qualities

A key driver for the establishment of National Parks was the demand for access to our finest landscapes for spiritual refreshment and recreation. Tourism and recreation are now very important to the rural economy and significant to the regional economy where tourism is a very fast growing sector.

Our objectives in this theme are to work in partnership with local businesses and communities to:

- widen the access opportunities to the National Park;
- grow the tourism market;
- enable the creation of new sustainable tourism proposals; and
- create a greater understanding of the National Park amongst locals, regional audiences and visitors alike.

Activity identified for 2003/04	Actual Result in 2003/04
Implement the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 by setting up a joint Local Access Forum, commenting on the draft map of open country and registered common land, and raising awareness within the Park community	Local Access Forum was established in May 2003. Comments submitted on the draft map of open country and registered common land. Information was sent out to every property in the National Park and four road shows attended.
Provide the secretariat for the Northumberland National Park and Countryside Joint Local Access Forum	Appointment made April 2003 and fully operational for one year.
Initiate a two year programme to significantly improve all aspects of signage on rights of way and develop a network condition database	In progress.
Assist in the opening of the Hadrian's Wall National Trail	Achieved with partners with great success.
Implement a further £43,000 of improvement work to the National Trail	Being identified.
Install five new cycle parking facilities at visitor attractions along Hadrian's Wall route.	Seven achieved.
Install new bus infrastructure along the Hadrian's Wall bus route.	30 new bus stops were installed in the main settlements.
Install two new green transport nodes	Completed.
Lay a further 560m of flagstone path on the Border Ridge section of the Pennine Way	Completed under budget, this enabled further work to be carried out to protect archaeology.
Complete 56 km of grassland management on Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail	Completed plus a further 750m of flagging, aggregate and pitching.
*** and undertake 560 m of surface and re-vegetation work on the Pennine Way to promote sustainable walking surfaces totalling	560m of flagged path completed and ***

Activity identified for 2003/04	Actual Result in 2003/04
390 Ranger days	
Work with Ministry of Defence staff at the Otterburn military training area to implement the second year targets identified.	Partially achieved as hindered by the vacancy of the Access Officer at the Defence Estates.
Implement building works identified in the first year targets of the Disability Discrimination Act Compliance Plan 2003	Three car parks improved with hard standing sealed surface areas. Tactile signage improved on public conveniences. Portable induction loop acquired for Eastburn.
Continue to raise the profile of the National Park by advising and supporting regional and local tourism partnership activity	Continued with brand photography, used by national and regional partners; advertised in national & regional publications. Contributed to county and regional tourism policy.
Proactively manage media coverage, set targets, identify communications issues, record and monitor coverage	All achieved except monitoring where more work is needed.
Promote the National Park as a visitor destination at three national travel trade fairs	The National Park was promoted at three national and one international trade fair.
Promote the work of the National Park Authority at six local countryside fairs/shows	The National Park was promoted at eight shows but quality improvements are required at the local shows.
Undertake partial refurbishment of the Once Brewed National Park Centre	In progress.
Publish Park Visitor free magazine.	Completed.
Install new road signage to all three National Park Centres and to the National Park	One achieved, but local signage is weak.
Implement the first year of actions from the National Park Information Point Network Review	New displays provided at Elsdon and Kielder.
Organise three familiarisation visits with travel writers and journalists to increase editorial coverage in magazines and other media	Two out of three were completed with writers from the Country Walking Magazine.
Manage and develop the 'Visitor Guide' on the new National Park website	First phase completed but improvements on usability are required.
Continue to work with communities and businesses to develop sustainable tourism products linked to access for all, walking and cycling	Completed Wooler Town Trail and interpretation; Rothbury and Coquetdale Tourism Association walking guide.
Research; identify the methodology; develop partnerships; and secure external funding that will actively encourage unengaged audiences to access the National Park	Took part in the Council for National Parks project to build links between ethnic communities and National Parks. Input as a partner in the National Trust's inner city project. Recruited an Audience Development Officer to continue the work. Research, methodology identification and external funding is outstanding.
Deliver an events programme focusing on the special qualities of the National Park	Completed

Activity identified for 2003/04	Actual Result in 2003/04
Encourage community involvement and increase awareness amongst landowners of the importance of biodiversity	Local community initiative delivered via Action Area projects, e.g. one Women's Institute collecting seeds from hay meadow plants and growing them on.
Increase understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment for visitors through walks, talks, events and displays in Visitor Centres.	A number of walks, talks and events were organised during the year – over 100 attended. Biodiversity themes promoted with local and visiting schools. The new displays in the Visitor Centres also include biodiversity amongst the key themes.
Deliver an education programme, with identified partners, which engages both the local school community and targets new audiences such as inner city and South East Northumberland schools and life long learning	Development of the web site. Roman Roadshow invited schools from South East Northumberland and special schools teachers were invited as observers. Centre for the Childrens' Book – working with adults on tapestry at Visitor Centre. The Pin Well project involved the local school community in celebration of an important local site.
Maintain a good standard of on-site interpretation	In progress. As audit underway as first phase.
Complete the mapping and marking of the Hadrian's Wall Cycleway	Route still to be completed but one new cycling map produced for Haltwhistle.
Produce marketing literature promoting use of the Hadrian's Wall Bus.	Completed.
Oversee the operation of the Hadrian's Wall Bus service, summer season	Completed.
Support and promote the 508 Bus Service and other bus services into and around the National Park	508 and 714 bus services supported but not promoted.
Improve community and visitor accessibility by holding 12 'Meet the Ranger' surgeries	12 Completed.
Provide 122 Ranger days to promote the work of the Authority at six local shows	Ten local shows supported
Initiate four 'town meets country' school activity visits and repeat the Breamish Valley activity week involving ten schools	Five 'town meets country' school activity visits completed and 230 children took part in the Breamish Valley activity week.
Plans and Strategies	
Complete the National Park Marketing Action Plan	Completed.
Undertake new research among socially excluded groups in Tyneside to understand issues relating to use of public transport and access to the countryside	Completed March 2004.
Install three new cycle counters to monitor use of Hadrian's Wall Cycleway	Four counters installed at Sellafield, Moor Row, Lowca and Ravenglass.
Evaluate cycle carrying facilities of the Hadrian's Wall Bus	Completed.

Indicator	Actual 02/03	Target 03/04	Actual 03/04	Target 04/05	Target 05/06	5 Year Target
National Park Visitor Centre satisfaction/effectiveness rating - average percentage score	85	86	68	70	75	90
The % of users satisfied with the NPA's services for understanding and enjoyment	98	95	89	90	92	95
% of users who feel the NPA's services for Promoting Understanding and Enjoyment are effective	91	93	87	90	92	95
No. of passengers using the Hadrian's Wall Bus services	17,075	18,700	26,458	28,000	28,000	28,000
% of total length of footpaths and other rights of way which were easy to use by members of the public	58	70	56	70	85	90
% of public rights of way signposted where they leave a road	80	90	77	90	90	90
% of the Authority's buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for disabled people	71	86	71	86	100	100

Our Management Plan aims are by December 2005 to have:

- **3 active urban / rural exchange programmes;**
- **30 opportunities created for currently un-engaged audiences;**
- **85 days per annum when the public can visit the Military Training area (non-firing days);**
- **85% of the rights of way network easy to use by the public;**
- **7 promoted cycle routes in / through the National Park;**
- **22,220 passengers using the Hadrian's Wall Bus;**
- **1.4 million visits to the National Park;**
- **20 businesses developing new sustainable tourism initiatives; and**
- **60 businesses signed-up to sustainable tourism principles.**

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Key Corporate Improvements

1. Explore external partnership management of Visitor Centres with local communities and businesses to provide business opportunities, improve the visitor offer and enable the Authority's staff to move away from operational activity and into more pro-active work in the sustainable development priority area.
2. Make a step change improvement to the rights of way network. Focussing initially on works that the National Park staff and volunteers can achieve but also lobbying the Highway Authority (Northumberland County Council) to improve its activities, which are acting as a drag on improvements to this public facing service. Also initiating empowerment and skills exchange programmes.
3. Modernisation through the use of ICT. Including:
 - Provide interactive digital images enabling virtual experiences of key aspects of the National Park's unique features.

- Continue to develop the website as a customer focused tool for communication.
4. More focussed communications so that our stakeholders understand what we are trying to do and how they can assist, including:
- Continue to build on improved media relations through improved radio coverage and targeting local newspapers with feature ideas. Research ways of improving television coverage.
 - Celebrate the successes, develop celebrity endorsement and involve others to develop trust in the Northumberland National Park Authority as an organisation to have confidence in and proactively manage relationships with key regional players.
 - Develop and start to implement a monitoring strategy, in association with the Association of National Park Authorities, to assess the effectiveness of communications.
 - Roll out new corporate image to all printed media and produce design manual which will reflect the essence of the National Park.

Other Proposed Actions for 2004/05

1. Re-assess the site risk assessment data for Northumberland National Park Authority public accessible sites.
2. Investigate and implement maintenance programmes to complete 56 km of grassland management on Hadrian's Wall Path to promote a sustainable walking surface.
3. Work with partners at regional and national level to raise profile of the National Park as a destination.
4. Attendance at three trade fairs and improved quality of presentation at five local shows.
5. Commission photography.
6. Work with local tourism providers and communities to develop sustainable tourism product which promotes/ interprets National Park purposes/ landscape.
7. Mapping, marketing and completion of way marking of Hadrian's Cycleway.
8. Operational management, monitoring and development of the Hadrian's Wall Bus (AD122) service.
9. Marketing and promotion of Green Transfer Nodes and encourage modal shift amongst visitors to Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site.
10. Support 714 and 508 bus services into and around the National Park.
11. Increase the use of National Park Visitor Centres as orientation and information facilities.
12. Develop National Park Visitor Centres as sale outlets for local products.
13. Promote environmentally sound merchandise in National Park Visitor Centres.
14. Support three local tourism associations through National Park Visitor Centres.
15. Increase number of Information Points and support and enhance existing Information Points.
16. Publish the 2005 National Park Visitor Guide.
17. Provide a public events programme which benefits both local communities and new audiences and focuses in on the enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of the park. Including:
 - Rivers and Burns;
 - An events programme to interpret the 21st Century Drivers Project;
 - Celebrating biodiversity initiatives;

- Hay meadows;
 - Assist ten local businesses in running events in conjunction with the Authority, linking to the special qualities of the National Park;
 - Promoting local tourism activities; and
 - Ten high hills walks
18. Seek external funding for a Park-wide project focussing on the red squirrel.
 19. Continue to deliver the Bridging the Border – Reaching New Audiences Project, which aims to help young people in the Tweed catchment area enjoy and understand their natural and cultural heritage.
 20. Create and develop 20 opportunities for engaging previously unengaged audiences.
 21. Achieve level 1 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, including a commitment to review equality for all in relation to service delivery and customer care, and employment and training.
 22. Establish two active urban/rural exchange projects and aid programmes of social inclusion. Make links with City of Newcastle Hadrian's Way Ranger to use Hadrian's Wall Trail to formulate three field trips to link town and country.
 23. Implement second year's targets for Disability Discrimination Act compliance of Northumberland National Park Authority's public sites & buildings.
 24. Initiate, design and build Disability Discrimination Act compliant unit to Middleton Hall Toilet block.
 25. Investigate possible funding and feasibility for the installation of a mains water supply for the Walltown building, and supplementary funding for the supply of electricity to Bulby's Wood and Cawfields toilet blocks.
 26. Re-tender Hadrian's Wall cleaning contract.
 27. Implement £28,500 of improvement works to Hadrian's Wall National Trail and Pennine Way.
 28. Seek external funding, develop and implement two new bridleway routes linked to local service centres.
 29. Continue to make final preparations for the commencement of the new right of open access, currently set at May 2005, including:
 - recruiting and training 30 volunteers to aid in the management of Countryside and Rights of Way legislation;
 - Assessing the Countryside and Rights of Way Conclusive Maps to predict access issues and liaise with landowners/users to install access point infrastructure and signage.

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Plans and Strategies

1. Implement proactive monitoring of linear access routes and predict uptake of new open access rights. Further develop the Rights of Way database
2. Working with partners to implement a regional cycle tourism strategy, including the development of new local cycle tourism initiatives
3. Complete National Park branding and contribute to the development of the brand for UK National Parks.
4. Review all visitor publications.
5. Develop new Hadrian's Wall Bus community forum to work up access for all initiatives for the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site

6. Develop an interpretation strategy specifically for sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Fund

A Thriving Community and Economy

Unlike all other English National Park's Northumberland's boundary was drawn on the basis of landscape, rather than social or economic factors. Hence communities and built settlements adjoining the National Park are excluded although they provide critical functions such as employment, health care, education and housing. The economic and social benefits of the National Park are significant for these communities. Our theme of a thriving community and economy is therefore one which extend beyond our landscape boundary.

Our objective is to work in partnership with others to create more sustainable communities using the National Park and its special qualities as drivers for economic and community development.

Activity identified for 2003/04	Actual Result in 2003/04
Set up the Northumberland National Park Authority Archaeology Forum: a group of interested local people to meet regularly to discuss the National Park's historic environment.	Forum is up and running – held two meetings during 2003/04.
Assist a number of community based projects to promote traditional music.	This work has begun with the Authority providing administrative support to the Rothbury Traditional Music Festival and investigating the potential for the Rothbury Auction Mart to be developed as a Cultural Centre and venue for traditional music events. A trial event attracted 300 people.
Recruit another 20 Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail Volunteers and recruit a minimum of 30 new Voluntary Rangers.	The full complement of Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail Volunteers is now operational. 25 Voluntary Rangers have been recruited.
Mid-term review of the contract for the delivery of the Development Control service (carried over from 2002/03).	The contract was reviewed and improvements purchased.
Provide three training sessions for Green Group supervisors and initiate four community-involved environmental projects	Training was organised for the Berwick Green Watch group and community environmental projects initiated.
Initiate a training and skills project based on traditional boundaries in the National Park	Funding for the main project has been secured from all sources with the exception of the Heritage Lottery who are supporting an initial survey before committing to the project.
The Ranger Team to provide a minimum of two trainee placements	Five trainees participated.
Organise three training events to raise awareness of the economic potential from cycle tourism development	Three organised, plus a Green Advantage Training session.
Continue to deliver the Sustainable Development Fund, and actively seek to promote the principles of sustainable development	The Sustainable Development Fund was 125% committed. Sustainable development is now an informal comment on relevant planning applications, internal training events were delivered.

Activity identified for 2003/04	Actual Result in 2003/04
Support 20 local community initiatives through Action Area and Sustainable Development funds	Achieved.
Firmly establish the Rothbury and Upper Coquetdale Project as an experimental approach to integrated rural development in remote areas	Partial progress.
Implement the 'Park House' concept at the National Park Centre in Rothbury as a first-stop-shop for information and advice for local residents and businesses	Not achieved.
Seek to be an early pilot site for the National Countryside Environmental Web-Information project	Nationally the project has been terminated.
Further develop the Action Area approach within the National Park to take forward the National Park Management Plan	North Tyne Action Area is fully operational. Cheviot and Hadrian's Wall areas are making significant progress. Upper Coquetdale is being re-appraised.
Use part of the Planning Delivery Grant to improve the development control service	In progress.
Review the development control planning arrangements with District Councils	Completed and scheme now in operation.
Prepare information leaflets on procedures for planning applications and complaints	In progress.
Employ part of the Planning Delivery Grant to expedite the local plan / local development framework to engage the local community in policy formulation	Action planned for 2004/05 following appointment of the new Forward and Community Planning Officer.
Plans and Strategies	
Through the Voluntary Accord produce a joint portfolio of voluntary and training opportunities	Due to organisational reviews and restructuring in partner organisations no progress was made in producing a joint portfolio.
Consult local communities on the review of the Structure and Local Plans	Joint Structure Plan progressed to examination in public. Work on the review of the local plan in the form of the Local Development Framework commenced.
Prepare, adopt and publish a Development Control Charter	Charter adopted in March 2003. Leaflet still to be published.
Produce a sample draft Section 106 agreement	In progress.

Indicator	Actual 02/03	Target 03/04	Actual 03/04	Target 04/05	Target 05/06	5 Year Target
No. of volunteer days led by the Authority	690	700	1,234	1,400	1,600	2,000

Average time to determine planning applications (weeks)	9	8.5	8.73	8.5	8.5	8
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Our Management Plan aims are by December 2005 to have:

- **30 community groups assisted in sustainable development initiatives;**
- **75 sustainable development initiatives actively assisted by the Authority;**
- **75% of local consultees who have felt engaged in the production of the new Local Development Framework; and**
- **15 businesses running events in conjunction with the Authority linked to the National Park's special qualities.**

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Key Corporate Improvements

1. Integrated delivery, community engagement and enabling community enterprise, including:
 - Ensuring that effective administrative support is provided to the new Action Area work and provide support, during the transition period, for the more traditional approaches to work areas;
 - Improve the role of the Rural Development Group;
 - Deliver 1st year implementation of the innovative transnational EU Interreg IIC programme funded TouriSME project that aims to explore the processes required to work with communities and other stakeholders to identify ways of delivering sustainable tourism linked to cultural activity in the Cheviot and Upper Coquetdale area. Deliver the first year of SusPECT; an innovative project;
 - Work with communities, tourism and land management businesses and partner organisations on the development of nature based tourism products;
 - Facilitate the role of the Northumberland National Park Environment Association to endorse and celebrate projects supported by Northumberland National Park Authority;
 - Work with Northumberland National Park Environment Association, communities and businesses to develop Visitor Payback mechanisms;
 - Deliver a Community Development project to engage local communities with Northumberland National Park and achieve mutual objectives through Action Areas and the Sustainable Development Fund;
 - Proactively encourage two communities to explore the special qualities of their area and share this with others and actively support the work of two established or developing community groups;
 - Complete two high quality, best practice, experimental projects to demonstrate rural sustainable development;
 - Actively assist 25 community groups in sustainable development initiatives through the Sustainable Development Fund, 'Bridging the Borders' project and the Audience Development initiative.

2. Ensure that the Local Development Framework is prepared as an implementation tool for the Vision of the Authority.
 - Commence work on the preparation of the Local Development Framework with the completion of the project brief
 - Prepare in consultation with local communities the Statement of Community Involvement for the Local Development Framework

- Prepare Local Development Scheme and submit to the Government Office for the North East.
 - Prepare the Core Strategy for the Local Development Framework.
 - Raise the profile of the National Park in Regional Planning and preparation of the Regional Economic Strategy.
 - Produce an innovative Building Design Guide
 - Complete housing needs survey for the National Park.
 - Implement Housing Stock Survey.
3. Modernisation through the use of ICT. Providing a modernizing infrastructure which:
- Integrates our existing web presence with that of the National Parks web portal;
 - Enables local businesses within the National Park to have their own web space within the Park's web site;
 - Provides support to local communities, by giving them their own space within the web site;
 - Installs a planning web portal which will be a new one-stop shop facility for the public, a centre for public information dissemination, provides guidance on best practice and allow for planning applications to be applied for on line.

Other Proposed Actions for 2004/05

1. Compile and submit an external funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund in support of a training and skills project based on traditional boundaries in the National Park.
2. Provide a minimum of four work ranger experience / placements.
3. Recruit and train a second modern apprentice in Administration and a third modern apprentice in information / communication technology.
4. Provide office accommodation for partner organisations at Rothbury.
5. Environmental management support and development for local tourism businesses.

Proposed Actions for 2004/05 – Plans and Strategies

1. Initiate / further develop an approved contractor scheme.
2. Ensure Local Transport Plan for Northumberland supports the Authority's Vision.

Budget Detail

Northumberland NPA £000s	Actual 2001/02	Budget 2002/03	Actual 2002/03	Budget 2003/04	Estimate 2003/04	Budget 2004/05
Natural Environment	419	625	484	584	461	635
Cultural Heritage	403	392	255	505	297	478
Recreation Management	365	439	342	520	379	667
Promoting Understanding	829	938	797	1,457	1,090	1,701
Traffic & Transport	105	233	203	211	180	169
Ranger Services & Volunteers	507	535	520	703	540	651
Development Control	62	72	61	106	61	122
Forward Planning	456	460	335	508	382	728
Corporate & Democratic Core	241	252	278	251	276	286
Training	20	22	15	30	24	34
Total Gross Expenditure	3,407	3,968	3,290	4,875	3,690	5,471
Actual or Baseline NPG	1,446	1,721	1,721	1,862	2,062	2,502
Local Authority Levy	482	574	574	620	621	0
Other External Funding	1,250	1,202	931	1,397	1,122	1,419
Sales, Fees and Charges	63	203	232	143	165	156
Interest	29	25	51	33	65	45
Capital Charges	193	193	200	194	219	219
Use of Capital Balances	17	0	72	153	112	35
Income	3,480	3,918	3,781	4,402	4,366	4,376
Transfer to (or from) Revenue Balances	73	-50	491	(473)	676	(1,095)

Natural Environment £000s	Actual 2001/02	Budget 2002/03	Actual 2002/03	Budget 2003/04	Est 2003/04	Budget 2004/05
Direct Revenue	105	265	131	249	126	301
Capital	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employee Costs	189	239	228	221	228	212
Overheads	20	1	2	1	0	2
Recharged Support Costs	91	106	110	99	93	106
Capital Charges	14	14	13	14	14	14
Gross Expenditure	419	625	484	584	461	635
Other External Funding	108	167	146	55	86	78
Sales, Fees and Charges	8	5	5	5	4	5
Income	116	172	151	60	90	83
Net Expenditure	303	453	333	524	371	552

Cultural Heritage £000s	Actual 2001/02	Budget 2002/03	Actual 2002/03	Budget 2003/04	Est 2003/04	Budget 2004/05
Direct Revenue	226	180	76	313	112	274
Capital	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employee Costs	93	136	116	130	127	130
Overheads	38	14	4	2	2	7
Recharged Support Costs	45	61	58	59	55	66
Capital Charges	1	1	1	1	1	1
Gross Expenditure	403	392	255	505	297	478
Other External Funding	284	190	139	326	187	242
Sales, Fees and Charges	0	8	1	0	0	0
Income	284	198	140	326	187	242
Net Expenditure	119	194	115	179	110	236

Recreation Management £000s	Actual 2001/02	Budget 2002/03	Actual 2002/03	Budget 2003/04	Est 2003/04	Budget 2004/05
Direct Revenue	158	145	79	224	109	323
Capital	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employee Costs	54	99	81	98	86	120
Overheads	37	62	61	63	62	73
Recharged Support Costs	25	43	36	44	38	67
Capital Charges	91	90	85	91	84	84
Gross Expenditure	365	439	342	520	379	667
Other External Funding	57	93	81	136	109	94
Sales, Fees and Charges	9	36	54	55	70	69
Income	66	129	135	191	179	163
Net Expenditure	299	310	207	329	200	504

Promoting Understanding £000s	Actual 2001/02	Budget 2002/03	Actual 2002/03	Budget 2003/04	Est 2003/04	Budget 2004/05
Direct Revenue	298	322	207	380	215	479
Capital	10	0	7	379	206	416
Employee Costs	288	357	333	414	384	453
Overheads	48	34	28	41	42	43
Recharged Support Costs	141	182	174	200	183	250
Capital Charges	44	43	48	43	60	60
Gross Expenditure	829	938	797	1,457	1,090	1,701
Other External Funding	229	127	65	150	177	265
Sales, Fees and Charges	45	75	76	78	79	76
Income	274	202	141	228	256	341
Net Expenditure	555	736	656	1,229	834	1,360

Traffic & Transport £000s	Actual 2001/02	Budget 2002/03	Actual 2002/03	Budget 2003/04	Est 2003/04	Budget 2004/05
Direct Revenue	65	192	161	168	140	123
Capital	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employee Costs	26	26	26	27	26	28
Overheads	1	1	2	2	2	2
Recharged Support Costs	13	14	14	14	12	16
Capital Charges	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gross Expenditure	105	233	203	211	180	169
Other External Funding	80	208	179	163	167	125
Sales, Fees and Charges	0	0	2	0	5	0

Income	80	208	181	163	172	125
Net Expenditure	25	25	22	48	8	44
Rangers Services & Volunteers £000s						
	Actual 2001/02	Budget 2002/03	Actual 2002/03	Budget 2003/04	Est 2003/04	Budget 2004/05
Direct Revenue	38	37	36	80	41	55
Capital	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employee Costs	335	328	316	436	341	386
Overheads	21	25	26	44	28	29
Recharged Support Costs	105	135	133	133	121	172
Capital Charges	8	10	9	10	9	9
Gross Expenditure	507	535	520	703	540	651
Other External Funding	31	33	30	188	38	28
Sales, Fees and Charges	0	0	3	0	2	0
Income	31	33	33	188	40	28
Net Expenditure	476	502	487	515	500	623

Development Control £000s						
	Actual 2001/02	Budget 2002/03	Actual 2002/03	Budget 2003/04	Est 2003/04	Budget 2004/05
Direct Revenue	44	72	61	106	61	122
Capital	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employee Costs	6	0	0	0	0	0
Overheads	9	0	0	0	0	0
Recharged Support Costs	3	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Charges	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gross Expenditure	62	72	61	106	61	122
Other External Funding	0	0	0	40	40	79
Sales, Fees and Charges	0	0	0	0	0	0
Income	0	0	0	40	40	79
Net Expenditure	62	72	61	66	21	43

Forward Planning £000s						
	Actual 2001/02	Budget 2002/03	Actual 2002/03	Budget 2003/04	Est 2003/04	Budget 2004/05
Direct Revenue	432	138	111	113	44	192
Capital	0	0	65	0	0	0
Employee Costs	13	76	35	150	103	158
Overheads	4	211	106	186	184	316
Recharged Support Costs	7	35	18	59	51	62
Capital Charges	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gross Expenditure	456	460	335	508	382	728
Other External Funding	411	384	291	339	313	503
Sales, Fees and Charges	0	0	2	0	1	0
Income	411	384	293	339	314	503
Net Expenditure	45	76	42	169	68	225

Corporate & Democratic Core £000s	Actual 2001/02	Budget 2002/03	Actual 2002/03	Budget 2003/04	Est 2003/04	Budget 2004/05
Direct Revenue	0	119	95	30	21	73
Capital	7	0	0	0	0	0
Employee Costs	367	382	400	483	461	581
Overheads	278	292	283	311	296	320
Recharged Support Costs	(446)	(576)	(544)	(608)	(553)	(739)
Capital Charges	35	35	44	35	51	51
Gross Expenditure	241	252	278	251	276	286
Other External Funding	50	0	0	0	5	5
Sales, Fees and Charges	1	79	89	5	4	6
Income	51	79	89	5	9	11
Net Expenditure	190	173	189	246	267	275

Training £000s	Actual 2001/02	Budget 2002/03	Actual 2002/03	Budget 2003/04	Est 2003/04	Budget 2004/05
Direct Revenue	0	0	0	0	0	0
Capital	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employee Costs	6	22	15	30	24	34
Overheads	12	0	0	0	0	0
Recharged Support Costs	2	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Charges	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gross Expenditure	20	22	15	30	24	34
Other External Funding	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sales, Fees and Charges	0	0	0	0	0	0
Income	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net Expenditure	20	22	15	30	24	34

Other Performance Measures

Ref.	Corporate Health Indicators	Actual 02/03	Target 03/04	Actual 03/04	Target 04/05	Target 05/06	5 Year Target
BV107	Planning cost per head of population	31.44	60	31.33	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Planning score against the best practice model	40	60	40.00			
BV200	Plan Making	n/a	a no b yes	a no b yes	a yes	a yes	
BV111	The % of planning applicants satisfied with the service received	n/a	75	84.21	n/a	n/a	
BV188	No. of planning decisions delegated to officers as a % of all decisions	59.32	66.00	67.05	n/a	n/a	n/a
BV109a	% of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
BV109b	% of minor planning applications determined in 8 weeks	77.78	75.00	84.85	75.00	75.00	80.00
BV109c	% of other planning applications determined in 8 weeks	76.92	80.00	88.89	80.00	80.00	80.00
BV204	% of appeals allowed against the NPA's decision to refuse planning applications	n/a	n/a	n/a	no appeals	no appeals	no appeals
BV2	The level if any of the Commission for Racial Equality's standard for local government to which the Authority conforms	0	0	0	1	1	2
BV8	% of invoices paid within 30 days	90.84	100.00	96.17	100.00	100.00	100.00
BV12	No. of working days lost due to sickness per staff	4.57	3.00	8.64	7.00	6.50	4.50
BV14	% of employees retiring early (excluding ill health retirements) as a % of the total workforce	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
BV15	% of staff retiring on the grounds of ill health as a % of the total workforce	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
BV16a	% of disabled employees in the NPA	1.40	2.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	3.00
BV16b	% of economically active disabled people in the National Park area	12.70	n/a	12.70	n/a	n/a	n/a
BV17x	% of minority ethnic community employees	1.40	2.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
BV17y	% of economically active ethnic community people in the Park area	0.24	n/a	0.20	n/a	n/a	n/a

Northumberland National Park Authority certifies that there were no individual contracts awarded during the past year which involved a transfer of staff and would require compliance with the requirements in the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts



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