

Report 3: Quarter 1 Performance Update

1. Purpose of Report

To present a progress update on the delivery of the Interim Work Programme and inform Members of the changes to the Strategic Risk Register.

2. Recommendations

The Authority is recommended to:

- a. Note the delivery of the Interim Work Programme
- b. Note the revisions to the Strategic Risk Register

3. Implications

- a. Financial: The financial implications to the Authority in progress in delivering the Interim Work Programme are already included within the medium-term budget plan.
- b. Equalities: Delivery of the work programme will see opportunities for more and different people to engage with the national park and the work of the Authority.
- c. Link to Business Plan: This report provides detail of the NNPA Forward Work Programme. Links to each Business Plan outcome are detailed below.

4. Background

- a. As reported at the March Authority meeting, there is currently an interim (Bridging) plan in operation to guide our work programme until we produce a new 5-year Business Plan.
- b. Details of delivery of the previous Business Plan were presented at the June Annual Meeting and some key performance indicators were noted as being unknown until national data sets are updated. These will be updated in the State of the National Park Report in December 2022.

5. Strategic Risk Register

- a. The Strategic Risk Register is currently under review to account for the different priorities of the Authority, as set out in the next Management Plan, discussed in Report 6 at this meeting.
- b. A risk workshop took place with Leadership Team on the 16 May 2022 and determined that it was likely that the headline risks to the organisation would remain. The revised Risk Register has the following headline risks:

1. The National Park Authority fails to respond to maintain business continuity during an emergency.
 2. The National Park Authority is unable to adapt to policy changes from national government.
 3. The National Park is unable to deliver nature recovery and enhancements of our natural capital.
 4. The National Park Authority is unable to be an Excellent Organisation Fit for the Future.
 5. The National Park Authority is unable to manage our financial position.
 6. The National Park Authority fails to deliver the goal of national parks for everyone.
 7. The National Park Authority is unable to make demonstrable progress towards carbon neutrality.
- c. These risks are still under review and may change as the new Authority Business Plan is finalised for March 2023.
- d. The most significant, currently evolving, risk to the organisation is the ongoing cost of living crisis and how this impacts Risk 5, maintaining our financial position. The impact of the current pay offer is set out in Report 2 on this agenda.

6. Interim Work Programme

- a. The 2022-23 Interim Work Programme is based on the revised aims of the National Park Management Plan. These are:
- 1) Nature Recovery
 - 2) Climate Action,
 - 3) Valuing Culture and Heritage,
 - 4) A Welcoming Park for All, and
 - 5) Thriving Communities

These are complimented by a 6th aim in the NNPA Business Plan which will be retained as:

- 6) Maintaining An Excellent Organisation That Is Fit For The Future.
- b. Our priorities for the year are:
- 1) Nature Recovery
 - 2) Embedding The Sill in the organisation
 - 3) Fit for the future

7. Nature Recovery

- a. The RSPB partnership Curlew Project continues and NNPA Staff and Volunteers have been undertaking bird surveys across the National Park as part of our ongoing monitoring. The project is continuing to conduct surveys and look for sites available for habitat improvement. Some areas have been identified for scrapes and work will begin in the autumn.
- b. The Hadrian's Wall: Recovering Nature (HW:RN) project on our farm at Greenlee has continued to deliver infrastructure and boundary improvements as part of our Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Stonewalling and troughs for livestock are part of this work, as well as the planting of 160 trees along the Haughton Green Burn. During this quarter 12 work streams have been defined to help with the prioritisation of the project, and these include Natural Capital Accounting, Opportunity Mapping and Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) payments. The large volumes of data required for this work have meant the project is in the process of hiring a part time data specialist to support the programme.
- c. One of the named objectives in the Interim Plan was to apply for the HW:RN project to be part of a Landscape Recovery Pilot (LRP). This application for a 5,000 ha LRP has unfortunately been turned down, but its development prompted the discussion and co-ordination of the surrounding landowners. The progress made to date is being maintained through applications to other funders.
- d. Our Farming team continue to actively support farmers and land managers, principally with their agri-environment schemes, but increasingly with training and knowledge sharing events supported by the Natural England supported Facilitation Fund. The application for additional facilitation funding was successful during Q1 and a new project officer is currently in post. Despite the recent recruitment of a new project officer, officer capacity in this team remains a challenge. Particularly with the significant amount of new and emerging policy, including the new Moorland SFI and Local Nature Recovery, and the noticeable increase in the demand for farm woodland creation advice.
- e. Impact on the State of the Park – Our work with farmers and land managers continues to be a priority for the Authority. Through our ongoing influence via the Facilitation Fund and stewardship applications we aim to support nature friendly farming in the National Park. Our work with the RSBP to support curlew populations in the Park aims to improve habitats and restore the numbers of our most iconic species.

8. Climate Action

- a. Net Zero Authority: The Authority continues to work towards the objective, set out in 2019, to be net zero by 2030. We have now established an effective monitoring system using central government conversion factors from energy used to equivalent carbon dioxide emissions (CO₂e). These monthly updates for each site are now sufficiently granular that we can now monitor specific changes that have been put in place without them being lost within annual data. This is a key first step as an organisation.

- b. Net Zero Sill: Our objective for the year was to develop a plan to make The Sill net zero as our biggest carbon emitter. Two funding sources have been identified and the practical solutions to this challenge are being explored.
- c. Net Zero Park: Through the Management Plan review we intend to commit to creating a net zero National Park by 2040.
- d. The Northumberland Peat Partnership is our primary delivery partner for identifying and improving peat throughout Northumberland. The Authority, in co-ordination with the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership and separately through the National Parks Partnership, have received two studies which indicate peat in NNP is the primary CO₂e emitter from our landscape.
- e. Impact on the State of the Park – Having not previously had an objective relating to emissions, there has not been any previous reporting on emissions within the State of the National Park. However, our objectives to identify and restore habitats continues through our desire to limit our emissions from peat erosion and degradation.

9. Valuing Culture and Heritage

- a. The Traditional Farm Buildings (TFB) Pilot Scheme is currently in the delivery phase. Projects have been extended by 1 year to cover delays arising from Covid and discussions are ongoing with Defra regarding the awarding of variations for additional costs. As of 30th June, 2 are complete, 16 have reached practical completion and awaiting final sign off and 5 underway. All agreements will end in 2022 with claims submitted and paid before 31st December 2022 when the project formally closes.
- b. Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Scheme continues to run events into the Autumn, prior to the project coming to an end. In terms of legacy of the project, there is now a wealth of information available about the area which can be found on the website: <https://www.revitalisingredesdale.org.uk/>, and a new Redesdale Archaeology Group has been established to continue the work which has been so successful to date.
- c. The Cheviot Hills Heritage Project (CHHP) expression of interest (EOI) is in draft pending internal approval, prior to submission to suitable funders.
- d. A grant offer to improve sections of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail has been received from the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative. This was applied for in 2019 but subsequently delayed initially because of Covid and then due to the impact of Storm Arwen. Work will be planned in the coming off-season with tenders for work, including heli-lifts being drawn up.
- e. Impact on the State of the Park – As the TFB and Revitalising Redesdale projects come to their conclusion, it is rewarding to see that community groups are coming together to continue the work in exploring and developing our knowledge of our culture and heritage. It is this model, through autonomous groups, which has been so successful in maintaining our Heritage at Risk survey work. Plans are in place with our Volunteering Development Officer to ensure

that volunteers supporting the National Park through Revitalising Redesdale can continue to do so under the guidance of the National Park where they choose to do so.

10. A Welcoming Park for All

- a. Embedding The Sill from a stand-alone project to an integrated part of NNPA is a priority focus for this year and much of the aims have already been achieved. The reporting frameworks and project targets have been replaced and The Sill activities and income is now treated more holistically.
- b. The Lost Spells exhibition and engagement programme has been prepared over the past year and was finalised in Q1 and launched in Q2, outside this reporting period.
- c. As part of the Hadrian's Wall 1900 programme, the Engagement Team are programming activities, events and exhibitions to celebrate 1900 years of Hadrian's Wall.
- d. Our targeted outreach and learning teams continue to work with communities most affected by the Covid pandemic and non-traditional audiences, as well as providing resources to schools and hosting visits to learn about our National Park. Our delivery targets for the year to date have been exceeded with more than five times the number of sessions and more than ten times the number of participants. This has been enabled by providing resources to schools who can operate at arm's length, engagement during National Storytelling Week and through engagement at Glendale Children's Show.
- e. Generation Green, the consortium led by the YHA, was extended through May 2022 and phase 1 has now been concluded. Funding for a further phase is now looking unlikely in the current financial climate.
- f. Impact on the State of the Park – The figures most often reported in the State of the Park report are the visitor figures. We are now considering how best to report and evaluate on the value of visitor experiences and engagement.

11. Thriving Communities

- a. The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has been approved to continue into the second (2022-23) and third (2023-24) year. To July 2022, 40 projects have received £500,000 of funding to help support nature recovery, mitigate the effects of climate change, support nature-friendly and sustainable farming businesses, and provide ways for people to discover, enjoy, and understand the landscape.
- b. The Farm Networking project has been continued into 2022-23 with a successful application for funding of the Hadrian's Wall Farming Group. This expands the network of groups which now includes the Upper Coquet and Breamish Valley, Taret and Ridsdale. These latter two are in their infancy and partially supported by external organisations. These groups are an important mechanism to promote

collaboration and knowledge transfer, particularly around farm resilience in the current environment.

- c. The development of the next iteration of the Management Plan is a key objective for the Authority this year. To date a draft text has been reviewed and workshops are planned for September for partnership and member input prior to finalising.
- d. NNPA have launched a Communities Fund which will provide up to £2,000 of funding to projects, community groups, businesses, charities and organisations that wish to deliver a project which is in line with Northumberland National Park's key aims and priorities. During this quarter £3,344 was awarded to two projects, one for sustainable transport and the other for access to arts and culture.
- e. Our planning team continue to operate with the new Local Plan in 2022-23. The Development Management team continue to deliver a positive and pro-active planning service and will maintain our high levels of performance for applications, pre-applications and approvals.
- f. Training and Employment opportunities are being developed through our projects and new business areas. We are exploring funded apprenticeship and professional development opportunities and providing management training for those who are new and emerging managers.
- g. Impact on the State of the Park – Our internally funded Communities Fund and externally funded FiPL programme are supporting the communities living and working in the National Park and helping people to visit.

12. An Authority Fit for the Future

- a. NNPA blended (hybrid) working arrangements have been in place since September 2021. Feedback has been sought from Managers and discussions are ongoing about the practical implementation of such an arrangement in the longer term. A review and decision about blended working patterns is due towards the end of Q2.
- b. The Authority continues to undergo a major IT reorganisation with the intention to be digitally enabled and evidence led. This, in practice, means there is a new digital strategy being implemented which brings together government guidance and legislation to ensure we have the correct tools to facilitate our work.
- c. The Authority will be completing the 2019-2022 OD strategy this year and creating the framework for the next iteration from 2023-2025. The strategy will address upcoming challenges for the organisation by reviewing future ways of working, focusing on equality, diversity and inclusion, and ensuring the staff and volunteer resource is fit for the future.
- d. We will continue to strive to grow our self-generated income in the coming year. More traditional revenue streams of car parking and retail were strong in the past year as the country emerged from the pandemic and people sought to holiday domestically. Fluctuations in the current year will be monitored closely, as prices rise and the economy changes. Our fundraising and commercial income

is becoming increasingly important and a new fundraising officer has been recruited to support this work area.

13. Conclusions

- a. The Interim Work Programme was developed to frame our objectives during the period of transition from the existing Business plan to a new plan by March 2023.
- b. The report sets out how we are progress and how our work is will impacting on the State of the National Park.
- c. Members are asked to note the progress of the work programmes underway and note the current progress revising the Strategic Risk Register.

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