

Report 2: Half Year Corporate Performance and Risk Register 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 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) operational plan in place to guide our work programme until we produce a new 5-year Business Plan.

5. Strategic Risk Register

- a. The Strategic Risk Register will be reviewed to account for the different priorities of the Authority once a new Business Plan for the Authority has been agreed. The development of the Strategic Risk Register is taking place in parallel with the Business Plan. (March 2023)
- b. There has been no change to the status of the Strategic Risk Register during Quarter 2 but an overview can be found below.
- c. The current 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.
- 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 1 on this agenda.
 - e. The Authority has in the past few weeks had a test of risk 1 when the Authority's IT systems experienced an incident. It is re-assuring for members to note that our resilience to this test of business continuity proved successful. We are currently looking at what lessons can be learned from this incident to reduce risk and enhance business resilience even further.

6. Interim Work Programme

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

These are complimented by a 6th aim in the 2016 - 2021 Business Plan which is:

- 6) Maintaining An Excellent Organisation That Is Fit For The Future.

7. Nature Recovery

- a. The RSPB partnership Curlew Project continues. NNPA Staff and Volunteers undertook bird surveys across the project area as part of our ongoing monitoring, during Q1. During Q2 the RSBP conduct additional surveys to check for chick survival and tagging. Some areas have been identified for scrapes which will enhance habitat for curlew and work will begin in Q3.
- b. The Hadrian's Wall: Recovering Nature (HW:RN) project on our land at Greenlee has continued to deliver infrastructure and boundary improvements as part of our Countryside Stewardship (CS) scheme. Meadow improvement works are also part of the CS scheme and seeding and plug planting continued during the quarter. Last quarter 12 work streams were defined to help with the prioritisation of the project. These include natural capital accounting and opportunity mapping. The large volumes of data required for this work have

meant the project is in the process of hiring a project funded data specialist to support the programme. Recruitment will take place during Q3.

- c. Our Farming team continue to support farmers and land managers, principally with their agri-environment schemes, but increasingly with training and knowledge sharing events supported by the Natural England project funded Facilitation Fund. An application for additional facilitation funding was successful during Q1 and a new project officer is currently in post.
- d. **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 National Park aims to improve habitats and restore the numbers of our most iconic species. Future surveys will be required to confirm the impact on curlew numbers.

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. After establishing a means of measuring our Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, work has begun on measuring the impact of Scope 3 emissions and, in particular, our purchased goods and services. These are hard to determine and represent a large proportion of our carbon footprint.
- b. Net Zero Sill: Our objective for the year was to develop a plan to operate The Sill at net zero. Two funding sources have been identified and applications will be prepared in Q3.
- c. 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.
- d. Following successful bids to The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Defra Nature for Climate Fund, the first half of the year has seen the Northumberland Peat Partnership (NPP) recruit a Programme Manager, 2 Peatland Surveyors, 3 Assistant Peatland Surveyors, a Data Officer and a Partnership and Engagement officer. To date 4 sites have been fully surveyed for restoration, 4 more are in progress and a further 2 are being worked up. In total this represents roughly 5,050 hectares of degraded peat identified to be restored. NPP is one of the six founding members of the Great North Bog (GNB) coalition and work here has seen the signing off of the GNB Strategic Plan and the drafting of a future Funding Prospectus.
- 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. We will add indicators to future iterations of the SoTP.

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. All agreements will end in 2022 with claims submitted and paid before 31st December 2022 when the project formally closes.
- b. The Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Programme officially came to an end on 30th September. After 5 years, 17 partners, hundreds of volunteers, landowners and multiple community groups have helped deliver 12 projects worth £2.8 million. The partners have developed a legacy strategy which will see those elements of the programme with ongoing work and maintenance requirements taken forward.
- c. 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.
- d. **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 continue to come together to explore and develop our knowledge of culture and heritage. It is this model, through autonomous groups, which has been successful in maintaining our Heritage at Risk survey work in the past. Plans are in place with our Volunteering Development Officer to ensure that volunteers supporting the National Park through Revitalising Redesdale can continue under the guidance of the National Park where they choose to do so.

10. A Welcoming Park for All

- a. The Lost Spells exhibition and associated engagement programme have been prepared over the past year and were finalised in Q1 and launched in Q2. Over 11,600 people have viewed the exhibition since it was launched on the 23rd of July. The exhibition will continue to run into the coming year.
- b. 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. During the quarter the APERTURA art installation was open to the public at Walltown and at Housesteads a temporary installation called '*The Future Belongs To What Was As Much As What Is*' stood at the North Gatehouse.
- c. 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 predicted at the start of the year.

- d. Generation Green, the consortium led by the YHA and involving all English national parks, was extended through May 2022 and phase 1 has now been concluded.
- e. **Impact on the State of the Park** – The figures most often reported in the State of the Park report are the visitor figures and there is a strong bounce back this visitor season after Covid. We are considering how best to report and evaluate on the value of visitor experiences and engagement as we welcome the next iteration of the Management Plan and State of the Park report.

11. Thriving Communities

- a. The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has continued into its second (2022-23) of three (2023-24) years. Year 2 of the FiPL programme started at the beginning of April with new projects receiving funding as well as work starting on multi-year projects. This year there is £350,000 allocated for delivery, of which over £280,000 has been allocated already and £62,000 claimed on completed work. There is still funding available for Year 2 projects, we are already taking applications for Year 3 funding which starts at the start of April 2023. The team are particularly looking for projects that deliver the People theme set out in the FiPL criteria.
- b. The Farm Networking project has been continued into 2022-23 with a successful application for funding of the Hadrian's Wall Farming Group. The group met for their inaugural meeting in July with a second meeting in October. The network of groups now includes the Upper Coquet and Breamish Valley, Tasset 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. The plan was approved by members in October and will be designed and published by December 2022.
- d. The 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 continues. Round 6 of the grant scheme has just concluded and round 7 closes in December 2022. There is a particular focus on projects that will help deliver Net Zero or Community Recovery.
- e. Our planning team continue to operate with the new Local Plan in 2022-23. Development management performance continues to meet targets, with some major applications being progressed in the first half of the year. This has significantly boosted income from application fees, which in general tends to be small with the nature of our applications.
- 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. After a review at the end of Q2 it was determined that these arrangements should continue, but not formalised, for a further 12 months. Blended working requires all staff are required to spend 40% of their time attending their place of work.
- 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 Organisational Development 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 in terms of delivering our new Business Plan.
- 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 during the busy holiday season. Our fundraising and commercial income is becoming increasingly important, and a new fundraising officer has been recruited to support this work area. A recent benchmarking exercise has demonstrated that the authority benchmarks very well in earned and fundraised income against the other English park authorities. Details are available should members wish to see this.

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 progressing and how our work will impact 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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