

## **Report 3: Health & Safety and HR Half Year Report**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to provide a half-year performance overview update of Health and Safety and Human Resources management for Northumberland National Park Authority.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Authority is recommended to:

- a. note the progress in achieving our Human Resources and Health and Safety objectives.

### **3. Implications**

- a. Financial: There are no financial implications arising from this report.
- b. Equalities: None
- c. Link to Business Plan: The effective management of human resources contributes directly to Aim 6 of the Business Plan, Maintaining an Excellent Organisation that is Fit for the Future. Delivery of Health and Safety objectives ensures compliance with legal obligations and contributes to maintaining an Excellent Organisation Fit for the Future.

### **4. Human Resources**

- a. The current Organisational Development (OD) strategy was agreed by members in December 2019 and has been regularly refreshed to ensure that it evolves with the needs of the Authority. It is a 3-year strategy due for completion in December 2022. As of November 2022, 80% of actions are complete. 10% will shortly be finished. The remaining 10% is delayed, largely due to COVID restrictions being in place. These actions will be incorporated in the next Organisational Development strategy. 6 additional actions have been completed following the refresh, including implementation of a hybrid working model.
- b. The new Organisational Development strategy is currently being shaped and will be presented to members in March 2023 alongside a new business plan.
- c. Lessons learned from remote working were taken forward in the Authority's practices to ensure working arrangements which are fit for the future. 100% of staff who are able to work from home expressed a desire for a blended working model. This way of working was trialled for 12 months. The Directors, Leadership team and HR Officer considered the results of the trial in the context of business needs, implications for the estate, learning to date, the opportunities to work more efficiently and with carbon savings, as well as national guidance. Staff were also consulted. A decision was taken to extend the trial by a further 12 months with a hybrid working framework put in place to ensure all staff work at least 40% of their time either on site or in an office and that there are regular face to

face contact points with Managers. This area of work will be further explored in the new Organisational Development strategy.

- d. 2 new apprenticeships have started recently. One is an existing member of staff undertaking a level 4 Data Analyst apprenticeship. We have also recruited an apprentice for the Communications team in a Content Producer post for 18 months. He will be learning new skills, developing his career and improving the website and social media content for the Authority.
- e. Recruitment has been very busy in the first half of 2022. It's noticeable that the labour market is very tight and that candidates have an expectation of being able to work from home and/or remotely right across the UK and internationally.

## **5. Wellbeing**

- a. Wellbeing of staff remains a key focus for the Authority. Support options include counselling, 24-hour helplines and access to our trained 'Listening Officers'. Staff are regularly reminded of these and can easily access them. A comprehensive employee assistance programme is also available, which includes free financial advice. A wellbeing at work policy will soon be published. This includes wellbeing at work support plans and stress risk assessments.
- b. The new wellbeing hub will soon be launched on the Intranet. It includes 15 different wellbeing initiatives, which are currently offered to staff. It will also have a section on financial wellbeing signposting to helpful resources and support organisations.
- c. We have partnered with 3 different organisations to provide a wellbeing programme for staff which will operate at lunchtimes. The first session was led by a cancer support charity, Fighting All Cancers together. Staff will also be surveyed as to what wellbeing sessions they would like, for example nutrition, sleep, stress resilience.
- d. Short term sickness remains low (predicted 2.5 days per employee). Over 50% of the short-term sickness was COVID related. The predicted sickness per employee falls to 1.0 days without COVID. The national average for the public sector has increased this year to 7.8 days.

## **6. Leadership and Management**

- a. A three-stage management and leadership development programme has been created. The appraisal framework has enabled us to identify employee aspirations and focus on succession planning. An Aspirational Management programme has been developed for staff who have little or no management experience. This is a 2-year programme and combines modules on mental health awareness, handling difficult conversations, motivating staff, budgeting, governance as well as mentoring opportunities with senior managers. 15 staff have started this programme.

- b. A key part of the Organisational Development strategy is a management toolkit to ensure empowerment and consistency across the Management team. The toolkit is well under way for all Managers, with three of the new managers having attended a three-day residential training course lead by the Management Centre.
- c. For experienced Managers, a need has been identified for leadership training. We aim to launch a Manager to Leader programme as part of the new Organisational Development strategy 2023-2026.
- d. Two Senior Managers are nearing completion of their Strategic Leadership apprenticeships with Northumbria University.

**7. Employee Engagement**

- a. During the review of hybrid working, staff consultation responses emphasised the need to meet together as one staff group. In the context of blended working, the number of all staff events has therefore been increased from 2 to 4 per year to ensure that staff have the opportunity for regular contact with other staff groups and to get out into the park. Next year, this will include the first ‘NNPA Giving back day’ where staff are given the opportunity to volunteer together for a different organisation.
- b. In addition, staff have been given 3 opportunities to do practical tasks in the Park.
- c. The Authority is proud to have won the ‘medium employer, inspiring women award’ at The North East Chamber of Commerce Awards. Six staff submitted testimonials and it was humbling to read about the impact of our career development opportunities and flexible working policies on their lives. Copies are available for members from the HR Officer to read if they wish.
- d. The Intranet continues to develop and will soon include a Managers hub, training section, hybrid working hub and new starters’ page as well as the wellbeing hub previously mentioned. There are links to support, events, ideas for wellbeing, training opportunities etc. The intranet is an opportunity for staff to gain information, share tips, motivate each other, and feel part of a team and is regularly refreshed to keep content engaging.

**8. Health and Safety**

- a. The Health and Safety Working Group has met once.
- b. In the first 6 months of this year, there have been a total of 6 incidents and 4 near misses with all remedial actions resolved.

The table below details the incidents and near misses between April and September

Incidents	4 at The Sill	Slips, trips and falls x 2 visitors Slips, trips and falls x 1 Officer
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		Burn x 1 Officer
	2 at Walltown	Lone working
Near misses	2 at The Sill	Object fell and steam burn x 2 Officers
	1 at Eastburn	A member tripped over a cable
	1 at Walltown	Sheep escaped into car park

- c. A revision of the Authorities' health and safety policy is currently taking place. It is anticipated that this will be published in the spring.
- d. Members H&S Training will be held on the next Authority day scheduled for Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023. The aim is to refresh members on their role and responsibilities for corporate H&S. All members should attend.

## 9. Complaints

No formal complaints have been received within this reporting period.

## 10. Conclusions

The Authority has a strong and clear Organisational Development Strategy in place, which ensures that our human resources can adapt and meet the needs of the Authority within available resources and capacity. Staff are able to adapt, are empowered to make their own decisions, have the necessary wellbeing support in place and are developing in their roles. The next Organisational Development strategy will further build on this excellent progress.

The Authority continues to focus on H&S, with only a small number of minor events recorded in the report period.

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Background papers: None.