

## **Report 3: Half Year Health and Safety and Human Resources Update**

### **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 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: The work within the Organisational Development Strategy will boost the Authority's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- c. Link to Business Plan: The effective management of human resources contributes directly to Outcome 6 of the Business Plan, An Authority Fit for the Future. Delivery of Health and Safety objectives ensures compliance with legal obligations and also contributes to Outcome 6: An Authority Fit for the Future.

### **4. Human Resources**

- a. The Authority's Organisational Development Strategy outlines how we are developing and supporting our staff, volunteers and members to deliver our goals through ensuring the right skills, culture, systems, ways of working and relationships are in place.
- b. The new strategy was agreed by Members in June 2023. It is now well under way including a review of ways of working, digital transition, career development, changes in the way we recruit and a review of all HR policies.

### **5. A Welcoming Organisation**

- a. A detailed and far-reaching Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity action plan has been created. A review of the entire recruitment process is under way. Some methods have been changed and others further developed. The Authority is already being proactive about inclusivity and working towards targets, for example becoming a disability confident employer. The action plan will enable further improvements to take place.
- b. Career pathways is a focus of the new Organisational Development Strategy. A recent example is the new to nature programme, through which, we have recruited a young person with very little conservation experience to start their career with us. This recruitment was very successful due to new recruitment methods being trialled. This

included the use of walking interviews, which are much more inclusive and accessible for some young people who may not have had a previous interview.

- c. A new wellbeing at work policy has been launched, which includes 15 different initiatives staff can access, including a 24-hour helpline for legal/financial advice or welfare support. Partnering with health organisations has led to a very successful lunchtime health programme, including Cancer prevention, menopause and men's health sessions. We have launched a Women's Health programme and will shortly be training five Women's Health Champions.

## **6. A Smart Organisation**

- a. Greater use of digital approaches whilst ensuring inclusivity will form a major part of the Organisational Development Strategy. An example is an automated system, which has recently been launched to streamline the process of new starters joining the Authority. This has resulted in a much more efficient way to welcome the new starter and to ensure all relevant teams are kept informed. The automation process will be extended to leavers shortly.
- b. Following a trial of hybrid working, a full review is now under way to consider how best to meet the needs of the Authority and to ensure it remains flexible and smart in its ways of working. The new ways of working will be implemented in March 2024. Our policies and procedures will also be refreshed to make sure we are truly a 364 day per year operation.
- c. Following the Business Review a new post of Volunteers and Organised Groups producer has been created and integrated into the engagement team. Alongside focusing on our work with organised groups, this post will ensure that there is a focus on:
  - Volunteers delivering organisational goals.
  - Volunteers' wellbeing, skills, development and career pathways.
  - Diversifying our volunteering offer

## **7. A Learning Organisation**

- a. Development opportunities have been a real success from the last OD strategy. Two senior managers have undertaken Senior Leader post graduate qualifications. In addition, one member of staff has undertaken a postgraduate certificate at the University of Oxford and another member of staff has completed a Masters. These achievements are celebrated on the Intranet to raise awareness of the career opportunities on offer. The Organisational Development Strategy will further develop career pathways, internally and externally.
- b. We must continue to build on personal development for staff. We have a structured management training programme in place and will widen it out to ensure career pathways from different sources to come into the organisation. We will conduct a

skills analysis of current governance and put a detailed member training programme in place.

- c. Employee Engagement. We have recently undertaken a staff survey which we have repeated bi-annually for the past 17 years. This helps us to identify trends and to proactively address any issues. Our scores have been high for many years, and we have had a very good response rate this year. The results are being analysed and the results will be shared with all staff and members. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.
- d. With our trialling of hybrid working, it is important to maintain a cohesive culture and we have therefore increased the number of all staff meetings to four per year, including a recent one, which included a walk to Sycamore Gap and discussion on potential responses by the Authority and its partners.

**8. Health and Safety**

- a. The Health and Safety Working Group has met twice during this reporting period.
- b. In the first 6 months of this year there have been a total of 4 incidents and 1 near miss. All remedial actions have been resolved and dated as recommended in the H&S audit.
- c. The table below details the incidents, near misses and location between April and September

Incidents	3 at The Sill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A visitor drove off the kerb and fell from her motorised scooter.</li> <li>• A visitor had a heart attack.</li> <li>• A member of staff opened a cupboard and a glass bottle fell out and broke.</li> </ul>
Near Misses	1 at The Sill	A child grazed their knee.
Violent Incident Form	Member of staff	A member of staff was verbally abused during a telephone call with a customer. Actions were taken to support the staff member and members of staff that have contact with the individual/locality were notified.

- d. A review of all of the Authority’s Health & Safety procedures has been undertaken and approved by the Leadership Team in November 2023. We are in the process of developing the members intranet (this will be completed by March 2024) and this will be one of the documents available to members to access directly.
- e. Members compulsory H&S training was completed in March 2023 and is timetabled to be refreshed on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

- f. Jon Wayte, Health & Safety Advisor, who was based at the Peak District National Park Authority has recently been made redundant. An external contractor will be appointed to support NNPA on Health and Safety specialist matters going forward.
- g. An internal Health and Safety Audit took place in May 2023 which returned a moderate level of assurance. This included, but was not limited to, positive assurances in the following areas:
  - Key Health & Safety documentation is clear and comprehensive.
  - Roles and responsibilities are clearly set out and appropriate.
  - Risk assessments are in place for key H&S activities.
  - Reporting arrangements around health and safety are appropriate, with regular reports provided to relevant groups.
- h. The audit highlighted three findings and recommendations, details as follows:
  - i. historic training records for H&S induction courses for existing staff were not on the main matrix however new staff completing the courses were. An exercise to rectify this and record in one place was recommended (medium priority), which is in progress;
  - ii. the auditor noted issues with the alignment of risk and actions in a risk assessment and recommended recording the review and formal sign off of risk assessments (low priority). The recommendation has been implemented; and
  - iii. the auditor recommended the completion of remedial actions should be recorded on incident forms to clearly demonstrate actions have been implemented and closed (medium priority). The recommendation has been implemented.

## 9. Complaints

- a. One stage 1 planning complaint was received during this period but was withdrawn by the complainant before conclusion.

## 10. Conclusions

- a. 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. We have an excellent wellbeing support framework in place, multiple opportunities for personal development and staff are able to adapt and be flexible. The new Organisational Development Strategy will further build on this excellent progress.

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