

9. **NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN – ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT AND OVERALL PROGRESS REPORT (A6121/JG)**

Purpose of the report

1. This report seeks Members approval for the Annual Monitoring Report and Escalations Report 2015-16 for the National Park Management Plan. It also seeks approval for the overall progress report on the National Park Management Plan 2012-17.

Key issues

- The National Park Management Plan monitoring reports illustrate partners' and the Authority's performance against the plan.
- The monitoring reports are 'point in time' reports, so it is acknowledged that some actions are still developing.
- The National Park Management Plan Advisory Group felt the reports illustrated impressive achievement given the ambitious plan and reducing budgets.
- There are a number of issues with the way monitoring of the current National Park Management has been undertaken.
- The updated National Park Management Plan will start to overcome some of the monitoring issues.

Recommendations

2.
 1. **The Authority approves the Annual Monitoring Report and Escalations Report 2015-16 for the National Park Management Plan and the overall progress report for the National Park Management Plan 2012-17 (appendices 1-3).**
 2. **The Authority thanks partners for all their work and contribution to date on the Management Plan.**

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

3. The Authority has previously and will continue to develop, implement and review a National Park Management Plan (NPMP), as the Authority is a place based organisation that exists to protect and enhance the special qualities of the National Park. Furthermore, the 1995 Environment Act states that every National Park Authority must update their management plan every 5 years. Monitoring of the management plan enables us to ensure the delivery plan is up to date, and feeds into the development of the next NPMP. As it is a partnership plan, it must be remembered that the NPMP monitoring reports outline the performance of partners and the Authority rather than it just being the performance of the Authority, which is set out in the Performance and Business Plan.

Background

4. Since the launch of the current NPMP (2012-17), a qualitative report on the progress of the plan has been produced every year, alongside a record of the performance of the actions set at the start of each year by partners. In the past, this has been reported to Authority in December; however, the deadline has been brought forward to allow findings to feed into updating the NPMP (2018-23). It was also felt that we should report actions closer to the date they have been recorded (as in previous years there has been a gap of over 9 months).

5. However, it must be noted that as in previous years the reports in the appendices are 'point in time' monitoring reports and therefore there has been progression on some actions since the information was collected in May 2016. For example, since the information was collected, the Peak District Local Nature Partnership have further developed their State of Nature Report.
6. The annual process of ongoing monitoring, information gathering and information sharing enabled the management plan delivery plan to be refreshed and kept up to date. This has been done via the following five shorter term signature programmes of work, referred to as 'Signatures'.
 - An Environment Open for Business
 - Destination Pedal Peak District
 - Better, Big More Joined Up
 - Community Led Planning
 - Inspiring Generations

The overall Progress Report draws from these signature reports but focusses principally on the progress of actions across each of the following themes which make up the agreed vision for the Peak District National Park.

- A diverse working and cherished landscape
- A welcoming and inspiring place
- Thriving and vibrant communities
- An enterprising and sustainable economy

7. **Overview**

Since the plan was launched in 2012, there have been 585 actions set across the four themes:

- 447 on track or complete,
- 120 behind schedule but ongoing
- 18 cancelled.

The detail of these can be seen in the progress report at appendix 1.

The below provides a brief summary of key points from the appendix reports:

- Good progress has continued during the fourth year of the NPMP captured in both the action reporting and the case studies.
- Areas where there has been limited delivery against the Vision Framework will form part of the evidence base for the update of the NPMP.
- A series of High Level Measures were set at the start of the NPMP. It is clear from the progress report (appendix 1) that future monitoring of the NPMP needs to address the many issues raised in the High Level Measures and action reporting sections of the reports.
- A simpler process for action setting and reporting is required in the next NPMP in order to clearly show progress against our shared vision and hold both the Authority and partners to account for our actions.
- In the short term, by working with partners to generate a smaller number of strategic interventions in the next version of the NPMP we can address many of the concerns outlined by partners in this report.
- Suggestions and lessons learnt from the existing plan have informed the process of updating the plan for 2018-23.

8. **NPMP Advisory Group Feedback**

The NPMP Advisory Group were presented with a draft copy of the 2015/16 progress and escalations report and received a presentation on the progress report for all of the current NPMP period. The feedback from the group has been incorporated into the final versions of these which can be seen in appendices 1, 2 and 3 to this report.

The Advisory Group felt that this was an impressive achievement given that the Management Plan was ambitious in the number and scope of the actions and that the last few years had been delivered against a backdrop of significantly decreasing budgets. The group also noted that the delivery plan was still in place until March 2017, so there is scope for the numbers to change, as delivery continues.

A key deliverable from the 2012-17 NPMP has been the closer partnership working between key stakeholders. This has been evidenced in terms of joint delivery on projects, shared objectives and regular opportunities to continue the conversation through information sharing, and pivotal NPMP events such as the Travel Summit and the Cultural Heritage Summit in 2015.

However, feedback from both the Advisory Group and wider partners suggests that a simpler more easily accessible document is required. Feedback suggests that the next NPMP should focus on prioritising issues and reducing layers where possible to make the document an easier tool for holding both the Authority and partners to account for their actions. Furthermore, a large number of the actions are led by the Authority, so we need to focus our efforts on action setting and reporting with partners going forward. To do this we need to ensure we get buy in to the future development of the Plan based more clearly on our ambitions for the special qualities.

Proposals

9. Although the Authority is central to the development and monitoring of the Management Plan, it is not an Authority plan, it is a partnership plan. It involves a wide collection of partners and stakeholders in both its development and implementation. The plan was jointly developed by partners and relies on them all to help deliver and monitor its success. Therefore, the Management Plan is, and will continue to be, a partnership plan and these reports are the performance of the Authority and its partners.

Members are asked to:

- Approve the Annual Monitoring Report and Escalations Report 2015-16 for the National Park Management Plan and the overall progress report for the National Park Management Plan 2012-17 (appendices 1-3).

The remainder of this section of the report outlines a number of issues with the way monitoring has been undertaken over the current plan period, and then how we must improve our monitoring in the short term for the NPMP update and then in the longer term in the NPMP review.

10. **Reporting Issues**

We recognise that drawing clear conclusions from previous progress reports during the 2012-17 NPMP has been problematic. This has partly been due to the inconsistency in reporting structure - for example the first year progress report was structured around the themes and from then on reports were structured around the signatures. In addition, in many cases clear milestones or SMART actions were not set. This has made it difficult to conclude if all actions have been delivered to the standard/target that was originally planned. There are also a number of actions that have been recorded as 'on-going, on track or behind schedule' and counted a number of times throughout the process. Finally, a number of High Level Measures were outlined at the start of the NPMP, but unfortunately very little further work has been undertaken to ensure we can report back on these at the end of the plan period.

Our monitoring must provide us with accurate information to enable us to determine how closely our plans match real world conditions as they evolve.

11. **Future Plans**

We must learn from the reporting issues highlighted above and ensure that we improve the way of monitoring the NPMP in the short term for the update and the longer term for the NPMP review. We acknowledge that we need to make the process simpler, remove the confusion between Themes and Signatures, and ensure future monitoring and high level indicators show progress.

We need to be able to say where the National Park was at the beginning of the plan period and where we are when we update the plan, thus enabling us to say what changes have occurred. We recognise that this will not be achieved overnight, however, the current work we are developing on the special qualities and the climate change vulnerability assessment will begin to develop the evidence base that is needed to be able to draw such conclusions. Due to the time required to undertake this work, unfortunately, we will not be a position to monitor in this way for the updated plan, but this is an aspiration for the review of the NPMP. Furthermore, as the NPMP is a partnership plan, we will work with partners to continue to improve monitoring of the plan.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

Financial:

There are no direct financial implications for the reports presented with this paper. In terms of the update of the NPMP, this has a budget associated with it.

12. **Risk Management:**

There are no direct risks associated with the reports presented in this paper. However, there is a risk that in the future, without improved monitoring processes in place, we will not understand the impact of the NPMP on achieving more for the special qualities of the National Park.

13. **Sustainability:**

Implementing the NPMP directly contributes to the sustainability of the National Park.

14. **Background papers** (not previously published)
None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Progress Report

Appendix 2 – Report on Performance 2015-16

Appendix 3 – Escalations Report 2015-16

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

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