

ANNEX 1

Peak District National Park Authority

Partnerships Policy

1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to guide the Authority's approach and management of partnership working to ensure that partnerships contribute to the agreed outcomes of the National Park Management Plan and Corporate Plans and are operated consistently and effectively. A partnership is defined as **"an agreement between two or more independent bodies to work collectively to achieve a desired and defined outcome."**

How the policy is implemented will be covered by a working protocol managed by the Management Team which will set out the appropriate processes and controls that should be applied to partnership decision-making and the roles and responsibilities of Officers and Members in these processes.

Implementation of this policy will require recognition that:

- any co-ordination and management arrangements should be proportionate to the risks and benefits involved
- it should strike the right balance between strategic oversight by members and/or managers and empowerment of officers at technical and operational level; and
- it should reflect that whilst National Park Authority Performance Assessment in 2005 recommended improvements, it did so against the background of marking as 'Strong' overall performance by the Authority in partnerships.

2. Scope of the policy

This policy applies to partnerships where they have either:

- a strategic purpose (such as where the partners meet to discuss, agree and monitor what each partner needs to do to achieve a collectively accepted outcome), or
- a major service delivery purpose (where partners have established practical joint working arrangements to drive the delivery of a specific project or outcome).

It especially relates to any partnership which:

- is an agreement between the Authority and any one or more independent bodies to work collectively to achieve a desired and defined outcome;
- where that outcome is embraced within a Peak District National Park Management Plan outcome and/or an Authority corporate outcome; and
- the partnership is designed to have a strategic purpose or joint delivery purpose.

This policy does not apply to the following working arrangements:

- when individuals, rather than bodies, are involved;
- when there is no specific Authority commitment or obligation to be delivered;
- networking or advisory arrangements, including membership of professional bodies
- local liaison and management arrangements, other than when they are of a major nature
- subscription services;
- representational membership of bodies such as the Local Government Association or the Association of National Park Authorities;

- representation on the corporate and community governance arrangements substantially led by other public bodies for purposes mainly not connected to the National Park, but which have impacts on the National Park, such as government advisory groups, Local Area Agreement Boards and Local Strategic Partnerships
- commercial contracts for the procurement or supply of goods or services; and
- charitable trusts, where the Authority's nominee and any other body's nominees must act solely in the trust's interests rather than represent their parent body's interests on the charitable partnership.

The policy draws a distinction between what is 'strategic' and 'major delivery' (requiring Member/Senior Management decisions) and what is operational (where risks and decisions are substantially delegated), using a risk-based approach that is consistent with other Authority decision-making is adopted. The Authority's Standing Orders sets out clear accountabilities for resource decisions, allocating controls to officers and members according to levels of significance and risk. Whilst the significance and risks of a partnership may not correspond precisely with its resource implications, the allocation of controls over partnerships should follow similar principles of delegation. Where there are explicit resource commitments in a partnership, these decisions will, as a matter of course, reflect standing orders and any other decision-making arrangements within our statement of corporate governance. Where an operational partnership is judged by officers, in consultation with members, to be of a higher political or reputational significance, it can be elevated to be considered as 'strategic' or 'major delivery' in this policy.

3. Furthering the National Park Management Plan through partnerships

The Authority has a leadership role through the National Park Management Plan in sharing influence with stakeholders and in empowering them and communities. The Authority will work with a range of external partners to achieve contributions to the delivery of actions and outcomes in the National Park Management Plan. In so doing, the Authority will seek to reduce duplication of effort between National Park stakeholders, add value to its own efforts, empower its partners, focus collaborative effort on outcomes, and make joint approaches to secure additional funding. The Authority will, at times, be expected to be a member of partnerships established by others for purposes more closely allied to other bodies than those of the NPMP. In these cases, a judgement will have to be made over the resources required, the fit with the Authority's NPMP and Corporate outcomes and the political and reputational advantages of joining the partnership.

4. Principles of good governance in partnerships

This policy is intended to ensure that the same degree of care is applied in a partnership of which the Authority is intended to be a member as it would in delivering work on its own. Ideally, the objectives should be clear, governance arrangements thorough, and actions taken and resources deployed carefully. Where the Authority is the accountable body for all, or part of, a partnership its governance procedures automatically apply. Where another body is accountable, then its procedures apply. It is important that this is clear for each partnership. Occasionally, bespoke governance arrangements (relating to a partnership agreement, an incorporated company or a trust) may need to be developed and followed.

5. The Scope of an Authority protocol for implementing this policy

The Authority will ensure a range of processes and controls are set up to implement this policy in the form of a working protocol. The main elements of this will be:

- a process for new partnerships
- a directory of partnership details
- a process for reviewing 'strategic' partnerships
- a process for reviewing 'major delivery' partnerships
- a process for reviewing other operational, networking and professional partnerships
- a process for partnership exit strategies

5.1 Process for new partnerships

The protocol will set out the steps in putting forward proposals for joining/setting up a partnership, assessing the costs, benefits, risks and governance arrangements and deciding on the case made at the appropriate management level for all future strategic or major delivery partnerships..

1. Proposals will need to make clear the outcomes and objectives of the partnership and the partners' potential resource commitments;
2. The Strategic Management Team will review all proposals
3. The assessment process will need to include how the partnership will add value in the pursuit of the National Park Management Plan and/or the Authority's own corporate outcomes;
4. There will need to be a check that proposals conform with corporate governance arrangements adopted by the Authority (when it is the accountable body) or an equivalent level where another organisation is accountable or where a special partnership organisation is created.
5. Proposals will need to show the partnership has an agreed life or the case for its continued existence is subject to regular review and an exit strategy where applicable.

The Authority will not create or join a strategic or major delivery partnership unless a proposal has followed the protocol and been assessed and determined at the appropriate management level..

Once the creation of, or joining, a particular partnership has been evaluated and supported, adequate governance arrangements need to be established for the partnership and for the Authority's participation in it. The protocol will advise on the expected Authority processes required to be followed that may include advice or contract drafting from legal services, approval processes for Officer and/or Member representation etc.

5.2 A directory of partnership details

The Authority will ensure that every new and existing strategic or major delivery partnership is registered in a directory containing appropriate information about each partnership. The protocol will set out the steps in registering these details and in using the directory to support reviewing processes (see 5.3 and 5.4).

5.3 Reviewing 'strategic' partnerships

The National Park Management Plan annual monitoring process specifically looks at the contributions of agencies and partnerships to the NPMP outcomes and actions. These are reported to this committee. Lead officers for each Outcome have the responsibility to compile this information in order to feed into the annual monitoring report. Many such 'strategic' partnerships include the Outside Bodies that members are appointed to (see Annex 2) and involve an agreement by the Authority to be a partner, with Member or Officer formal representation, and sometimes a funding contribution. It is proposed that the partnership protocol sets out guidance on these matters for 'strategic' partnerships and they are included in the partnership directory. Examples of these would be the Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership Forum and the Local Access Forum.

It is also proposed that as part of the Lead Officers annual role to input to the NPMP annual monitoring report that they seek feedback on partnerships inviting specific Authority Members who are on relevant Outside Bodies or are relevant Member Representatives to provide any feedback from their viewpoint on these 'strategic' partnerships, (although where existing arrangements exist these should not be duplicated). These will be timetabled between April and June each year to fit the NPMP annual monitoring process.

5.4 Reviewing 'major delivery' partnerships

Officers manage 'major delivery' projects and partnerships through Service Plans and are required to review the outputs from these against their planned annual targets and actions. Heads of Services have the responsibility to compile this information in order to feed into the quarterly and annual performance reporting processes. Most 'delivery' projects and partnerships involve commitments from the Authority that are governed by procedures summarised in our statement on corporate governance, such as Standing Orders and existing protocols operated by Resource Management Team and Services Committee. These can be either when the Authority is the accountable body or for when our finances are used by the partnership. It is proposed that the partnership protocol sets out the framework for how these are managed through our existing corporate governance arrangements (or equivalents of other bodies) and also that we ensure that they are included in the partnership directory. Examples would be Moors for the Future partnership, The Destination Management Partnerships and the Peak District Interpretation Project.

It is also proposed that all 'major delivery' projects and partnerships are explicitly included as separate 'Service Plan' actions by Heads of Service so that their outputs can be tracked within the Service Plan process. A list of Outside Bodies dealing with Corporate matters that would need to be included explicitly in Service Plans is given in Annex 2.

5.5 Reviewing other operational, networking and professional partnerships

Most other partnerships are information sharing or networking meetings to enable officers to keep in touch with developments in their area of work and share current plans and practices. Or, they are also locally significant liaison arrangements, with key user groups or communities, with landowners or with other operational services such as police, fire and councils. There are no significant commitments or obligations (typically only minor subscriptions or operational costs) and hence the risk to the Authority in such matters is best managed by operational managers. It is expected that Area Teams, for example, will develop such arrangements further as part of their more external-facing role. We propose that these partnerships are managed by Team Managers and Heads of Services through normal delegated staff performance and budget processes and do not require further explicit management through the partnership protocol nor to be managed through the partnership directory. Whilst it is possible that 'things may go wrong', the evidence is that staff are highly capable of managing these arrangements and it would also be counter the culture that we are seeking to establish to manage such risks from the centre.

5.6 Partnership exit strategies

The protocol will set out the steps that the Authority expects a partnership to undertake to review its progress at intervals and consider the satisfactory management of all financial and other resource matters, including discharging obligations to funding partners and staff; and managing public expectations about services and outcomes, especially where users have had direct transactions with the partnership.

The protocol will also set out the steps the Authority would need to undertake in deciding to withdraw from a partnership and how to execute an exit strategy. This will involve considering carefully all of the risks of doing so; engage in full dialogue with partners; consider how to maintain any benefits of the partnership in the long term; and prepare a strategy for communicating the withdrawal to the partners and to the public so as to avoid confusion and rumours. For strategic and major service delivery partnerships such cases will need to be made at the appropriate level of decision-making.

6 Review of this policy

This policy and the processes established in a protocol should be refined through the ongoing experience of operating them and be seen as a continuous process of performance improvement. They may need to be more formally reviewed in the future to check that they still adequately cover the range of partnership working arrangements the Authority is dealing with.

**Peak District National Park Authority
July 2008**