

3. PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK DRAFT RECREATION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (A702/JIM)

Purpose of the report

1. This report seeks Member approval of the Peak District National Park Recreation Strategy and Action Plan before further consultation with the public as a key step towards meeting the National Park Management Plan (NPMP) outcome for recreation:

“By 2011 all people, especially those from disadvantaged communities, children and young people, and the elderly should:

- Feel welcome in the National Park
- Have the opportunity to participate in diverse recreational activities that enhance the quality of their lives”

The Strategy and Action Plan provide a framework for a new approach to recreation management in the National Park based on six key themes and a basis for future resource planning.

Recommendations

2.
 1. **The attached Recreation Strategy and Action Plan is approved by the Authority as the framework for action to deliver National Park outcomes for recreation with partners.**
 2. **The Authority agrees that further comments from Members, partners and stakeholders on the draft document be addressed in the final version with authority delegated to the Director of Strategy & Development to make such changes in consultation with the Member Representative for Recreation.**
 3. **The Authority, through the lead officer and Member Representative, works with lead partners, user groups and facility providers to ensure their contributions to this Action Plan.**
 4. **The Strategy and Action Plan informs the Authority’s Corporate Priorities, with the level of contribution by the Authority to the Action Plan being annually determined through the Annual Performance and Business Planning Process.**
 5. **The Authority notes that the process for monitoring the Action Plan will be through the National Park Management Plan Annual Monitoring Reporting to Audit and Performance Committee.**

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

3. The current National Park Management Plan 2006-11 sets out an Outcome (7) for Recreation and Tourism which recognises the need for a clear, evidence-based Recreation Strategy and Action Plan for the Peak District. The Strategy sets out how the outcome for recreation can be achieved and clarifies the role of the Authority in contributing to this work.

Background

4. The preparation of a new Recreation Strategy and Action Plan commenced in April 2008 supported by a small project management team of officers and the chair of the Local Access Forum (LAF). A workshop at Losehill Hall for partners and stakeholders in May 2008 looked at opportunities for enhancing and raising awareness of recreation opportunities in the National Park. A Member Scrutiny Panel, chaired by Pat Coleman, has been involved during the development of the Strategy and the Member Representative for Recreation, Geoff Nickolds, has been involved since February 2009. The LAF has been informed of progress on a regular basis, with a sub-group helping to formulate proposed actions.
5. The annual Parishes Day in September 2008 focused on recreation and an Authority Member workshop on recreation was held on 27 February 2009. These events gave opportunities to contribute views to the developing strategy.
6. Six main themes provide the framework for the Strategy:
 - healthy lifestyles
 - widening participation
 - climate change and sustainability
 - raising awareness and understanding
 - partnership working
 - community participation including volunteering.
7. Data collection has enabled current recreation provision to be mapped. An online survey carried out by consultants from late August to early October 2008 provided information on popular activities and the aspirations of users. Anecdotal evidence was also collected from those officers working in the recreation sector.
8. Links to constituent councils' policies and strategies for recreation, sport and leisure have been taken into account, as have the Authority's own strategies and plans for Landscape, Biodiversity, Cultural Heritage, Sustainable Transport, Climate Change, Working with People and Communities and the developing Local Development Framework.

Proposals

9. Following consideration of the Strategy and Action Plan at this Authority Meeting, public consultation will begin on 3 August for an extended period to 25 September. This will take the form of an online consultation, with a link sent to all partners and stakeholders. A news release will announce the commencement of the consultation and how to engage in it.
10. Following an assessment of the consultation responses, it is proposed that final changes will be agreed by the Director of Strategy & Development in consultation with the Member Representative for Recreation. Design and printing of the approved Strategy and Action Plan will be completed in late 2009 / early 2010. It is proposed that a launch event with stakeholders will be held in spring 2010.
11. The Recreation Strategy recognises the important contribution of recreation facilities and opportunities in the wider Peak District. An extensive list of partners and stakeholders has been compiled, many of whom will be involved in helping to deliver the aims of the Action Plan. An annual Recreation Partnership meeting, to be chaired by the Member Representative, will review progress and an Implementation Group will be formed of key stakeholder representatives to ensure the Action Plan is taken forward.

12. The Action Plan contains headline actions, suggested key partners, priority and indicative measures. The Action Plan will be finalised following the public consultation and developed in detail in discussion with partners in the proposed Implementation Group. Targets and measures will be refined to enable annual monitoring to take place through the National Park Management Plan Annual Monitoring Report.
13. Actions to be led by the Authority will be put forward as part of the organisation's budget and service planning process.
14. The Recreation Strategy and Action Plan will:
 - provide a clear vision of how recreation in the National Park should be developed over the next ten years
 - provide guidance on priorities for resources for the Authority and partners
 - facilitate a more co-ordinated approach to the provision of recreation opportunities and information, particularly through the use of key sites
 - increase promotion of sustainable choices through information and interpretation
 - raise awareness of the health and well being benefits of outdoor recreation for example, by working in partnership with Cycling England and other partners to deliver a 26km Matlock to Buxton cycleway
 - build on the work of the Working With People and Communities Strategy to enable target groups to experience and enjoy the Peak District.
15. The following comments have been provided by Pat Coleman as chair of the Recreation Strategy Scrutiny Panel:

“The Member Scrutiny Panel has met on nine occasions since November 2007 when work on developing the Strategy began. Members of the panel were also involved in the launch workshop in May 2008 and the annual Parishes Day. It has not proved easy to define the exact role of the panel in a situation where the focus of the “scrutiny” i.e. the Strategy, has been in the process of development. “Advice on format and content”, “steering the process”, “representation of the Member view”, and “representation of the non-specialist view” have all been elements of the role the panel has performed. At one point the panel sought to take on a liaison role with constituent local authorities to gather information about their recreation provision but with limited success.”

“The panel's view is that whilst there is still some work to do on the strategy it has reached a point where it is ready to be subjected to wider consultation. We believe there is sufficient here in terms of analysis and content to guide future actions for the foreseeable future. We are pleased that the importance of active management of recreation to ensure responsible use and avoid conflict between different user groups is identified as a key element of the strategy. Ideally we would like to see the following addressed in the final version:

 - Greater emphasis on the distinctiveness of recreation opportunities in this National Park with direct links made to the special qualities
 - More reference to the mental benefits of recreation in the Peak District to balance the physical benefits i.e. possibly less emphasis on health and more on general well being and quality of life
 - Further developing the strategy to highlight transformational opportunities – which we believe lie in the areas of interpretation and access.”
16. The points raised by the Scrutiny Panel will be considered by the project management team alongside and following the public consultation process. A final meeting of the Scrutiny Panel and the project management team has been

arranged for 4 November, after which the Strategy and Action Plan will be finalised. The Scrutiny Panel will make its report to Audit and Performance Committee on 22 January 2010.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

17. **Financial:** The actions proposed have some financial implications at the implementation stage and we will seek to harness the efforts and resources of partners to work with us on projects and actions. The Authority has allocated £6,000 annually towards co-ordination of this work. Additional resources are made available in annual budgets for recreation work on our own properties and on rights of way. Any additional Authority commitment to further actions within the Strategy and Action Plan will be considered through the annual budgetary cycle. The Action Plan makes it clear that delivery of all actions will depend on availability of resources and partnerships.

18. **Risk Management:** Risks will be applied to the finally agreed actions in the Action Plan as part of the NPMP Annual Monitoring Report. There is a potential risk of lack of outcome delivery through lack of partner engagement or inadequate resources.

19. **Sustainability:**

The Strategy and Action Plan help to achieve:

- the aims of the Climate Change Action Plan in terms of actions to increase sustainability of visits, focus investment on gateway sites and raise awareness of climate change.
- the aims of the Sustainable Transport Plan in terms of actions to improve cycling, walking and riding links to urban areas and increase availability and use of public transport.
- the aims of the Biodiversity Action Plan and Cultural Heritage Strategy by celebrating the special qualities of the National Park and by ensuring recreation management and development are balanced with conservation interests.

20. **Equalities Impact Needs Assessment (EINA):**

The strategy aims to improve recreation opportunities for all but focuses on raising awareness and opportunities to under-represented groups such as young people and disadvantaged groups as prioritised in the Authority's Working with People and Communities Strategy. A stage 1 EINA has been completed for the strategy.

21. **Background papers**

None

Appendices

Appendix 1: Recreation Strategy and Action Plan

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Judy Merryfield, Recreation Strategy Team Manager, Lead Officer on Recreation, Thursday 23 July, 2009.