National Park Authority Meeting
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Corporate Resources

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<u>**APPENDIX 2**</u>

Local Government
East Midlands ●●●

**Personal Development Planning at Peak District National Park Authority
to take member development forward**

July 2009

**An activity carried out by Local Government East Midlands (LGEM) in
partnership with the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA) for
Local Government.**

I&DeA
improvement and development agency

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Summary

This report provides the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) with an analysis of the learning and development needs of the 15 members who have undertaken a one to one personal development plan discussion, (PDP), with Lisa Butterfill, HR & Development Manager from LGEM.

This is a positive start to a process new to members of the PDNPA and represents a 50% success rate so far. There are further plans to encourage other members to take advantage of this process.

This report also recommends suggested development activities that the PDNPA may find useful in meeting the identified learning needs of members, taking into account the preferred learning styles identified. Further guidance is provided on monitoring and reviewing of the PDP's and some best practice guidance to support the PDNPA in its commitment to improving the already good work being carried out in relation to member development in order to support it's members in the future.

It is important to mention that while member development is a joint responsibility between the individual member and the PDNPA, a personal development plan requires the individual's commitment to continuous development, and the responsibility for following up on identified needs rests predominantly with the member, supported by the PDNPA.

Personal Development Planning is a key tool to help the authority identify and prioritise the needs of individuals aligned with the role of the member and priorities of the authority, which will provide a focused training and development programme.

Background Information

PDNPA has commissioned LGEM, working in partnership with the I&DeA, to carry out personal development planning for all members to provide a comprehensive diagnosis of learning and development needs within the context of the individual member roles and the corporate outcomes, actions and priorities of the PDNPA.

In October 2007, members approved a set of proposals to improve the way member training and development is provided – a key activity of which was an annual review of member needs through personal development plans using an agreed skills and knowledge matrix. In March 2008, the authority signed up to the East Midlands Regional Member Development Charter and appointed Patricia Coleman as the member representative for member learning and development.

The authority is keen to ensure that member development is a strategic issue and should be seen in the context of the vision for the National Park, the achievement of National Park Management Plan outcomes and the delivery of the Authority's own corporate outcomes and actions. One of the key corporate actions for the authority is K3; Valuing and developing staff and members and the authority's objective for member development is:

- To enable members to develop appropriate skills, knowledge and behaviours to improve effectiveness, fulfil their role as a member of the authority and that processes are in place to support this within a framework of good governance and continuous improvement.

Having identified that the introduction of personal development plans is a key way to ensure that development solutions are targeted to individual needs and roles, it was felt that, at the time, undertaking one to one discussions with members could not be delivered within existing internal resources. Commissioning external support, together with taking advantage of regional funding for authorities signed up to the charter, would allow the PDNPA to put in place focused plans and a development programme for members in the future.

Overview of the approach taken

In December 2007, Lisa Butterfill met with Ruth Marchington and Christine Hume to discuss the options for member development support including undertaking personal development planning.

In February 2008 Lisa Butterfill submitted a proposal for carrying out personal development planning to Ruth Marchington outlining the suggested approach, relevant costings and the benefits of accessing current improvement and efficiency partnership funding for all authorities signed up to the East Midlands Regional Member Development Charter.

A meeting followed between LGEM/I&DeA and Ruth Marchington & Eugene Judge to discuss the requirements and outcomes required by the authority from carrying out member personal development plans, in order to scope and tailor the approach.

It was agreed that the following actions would be taken:

- To ensure the focus of the one to one discussion on the role(s) of members and the NPA outcomes, the current generic member role description and the I&DeA member skills framework was mapped to the PDNPA skills and knowledge matrix.
- To develop a standard one to one discussion template
- To develop guidance documentation for members, i.e. FAQ's and an Introduction to PDP's sheet.
- To conduct a briefing session on 28th November for the pilot group of members

The key features of the one to one discussion with members were as follows:

- A reflection on their experiences as members over the past 12 months in order to identify how they had contributed to NPA outcomes
- A reflection on the skills, knowledge and experience members already brought to their role (s) as well as what had been gained since joining the PDNPA
- Looking forward to what they hoped to achieve in the next 12-18 months in the role(s) undertaken, being mindful of the authority's outcomes
- The identification of areas of strength and development in respect of the following skills and knowledge set:

    Strategic and External Leadership
    Governance, Performance and Scrutiny
    Contribution and Development
    Communication

- Undertaking the learning styles questionnaire

- Only the personal development plan page would be seen by officers responsible for organising and monitoring training. The remainder of the document to be confidential.

Following the undertaking of the one to one discussions with the 8 pilot members, a debriefing session with those members took place on 27 February 2009 to determine the process going forward. Those members unable to attend were asked to feed in their views prior to the session.

Below are some general observations from the pilot members:

"It gave me somebody to talk things through with – a face to face discussion"

"It made me think about the job and how to do it better"

"I felt more part of the Authority and its work"

"Makes you feel more valued"

"It helped my recognise my strengths and weaknesses"

"It helps you to think about how you can get more satisfaction out of your time with the Authority".

One outcome of the feedback session was that for each member undertaking one to one's in the future, Lisa would contact them individually, prior to their PDP, in order to discuss the process and to tailor the type and amount of information required by each member (from a toolkit of options) in advance..

Learning and Development needs identified and Learning Styles Analysis

Areas of Learning and Development Required	Total Number of Members	Learning Styles
Strategic and External Leadership		
Community Leadership, Engagement and Empowerment – engaging and empowering community agenda Leadership Skills	1 1	Reflector
Partnership Working	5	Activist Reflector x2 Theorist
Networking Skills	4	Theorist x 2 Reflector x 1
Advocacy/Promotion of the PDNPA	1	
Governance, Performance and Scrutiny		
Strategic Performance Management – links to interpreting budget data links to scrutiny	3	Reflector
Understanding how the budget process works better	1	Theorist
Questioning and Constructive Challenge	2	Reflector/Theorist
Giving meaningful and Constructive feedback	1	Reflector/Theorist
Basic and Advanced Scrutiny Skills	2	Reflector/Theorist
Increased knowledge of Strategies and Action plans relating to Climate Change and Landscape*	1	Pragmatist
Contribution and Development		
Chairing Skills Dealing with Conflict in Meetings	2 1	Unknown Activist
Speed Reading	1	Reflector/Theorist
Time Management Dealing with and managing Information Effectively	1 2	Reflector/Theorist Theorist
Having an annual review with the CEX and Chair to review impact over the year	1	
Understanding the Member Representational Role better	**1**	Pragmatist
Communications		
Influencing and Persuading Skills Links to "impact" in input at committees	3	Theorist Reflector
Media Training	2	Reflector Pragmatist
IT Support	3	All preferred a 1:1 basis
Presentation Skills	1	Reflector/Theorist
Other		
ANPA Conference	1	Pragmatist

Other observations and feedback

Whilst some members did not feel that specific development was required for them as individuals, general feedback was given with respect to the following:

- Having the opportunity to input into the way the authority performs the scrutiny function to ensure continuous improvement.

- Some of the members with member representation roles felt they would benefit from a greater understanding of the outcomes expected from their role which would assist them in carrying out focused activities.

- Members generally felt that relationships with officers were very positive. To strengthen this, a suggestion was made to ensure a clear practical understanding of the difference between the member and officer role was clearly understood by all members.

- All members felt that they benefited from the workshops the authority has previously conducted and all would be willing to attend workshops to keep them informed and up to date on matters that affected the authority. In particular receiving regular planning development and updates was requested as well as climate change and landscape*.

- Three members expressed an interest in being a mentor as well as being more involved in the induction process of new members.

- Members generally felt there were benefits to be gained from working across the three "categories" of members.

Learning Style Overview

To supplement the interviews, members were asked to complete a learning styles questionnaire (Honey and Mumford) which enables the member to identify their preferred route to learn and the authority to match, as far as it is reasonably possible, the way in which learning and development is provided.

11 out of the 15 members completed a learning styles questionnaire and found it useful.

From the questionnaires completed the preferences of members with regard to learning styles show that being a **reflector** is the **most dominant preference**, closely followed by a pragmatist learning style, theorist and finally activist.

In the learning and development needs analysis table, the learning styles identified have been linked to the type of development requested, in order to aid the authority in selecting an appropriate delivery method.

In Appendix 1 there is a general outline of the characteristics of each learning style and some suggested delivery methods to support each style. It is important to note that workshops, where they contain a mixture of activities, i.e. information giving, opportunity to interact/practice etc will generally be a good solution where there are mixed learning preferences. Perhaps including a further development options information sheet/powerpoint slide may be useful at the end of a workshop so people could select additional learning, according to their learning preference.

Addressing Identified Needs

From the areas identified in the learning and development needs analysis table, outlined below are some suggested workshops:

Strategic and External Leadership
- Community leadership, engagement and empowerment – focusing on the duty to involve and engage and be an advocate

- Partnership Working (to include skills as well as understanding the role the authority plays in key partnerships; how to raise the profile of the authority and use the benefit of working with others to help deliver on the NPA outcomes)

- Networking skills – linked to partnership working but not exclusively

Governance, Performance and Scrutiny
- Strategic Performance Management - to include not just understanding the process but how it links to interpreting budget data and scrutinising the effectiveness of performance management in a practical way.

- Effective scrutiny and challenge skills – to include questioning skills and giving constructive and effective feedback

Contribution and Development
- Chairing Skills - to include dealing with conflict in meetings

- Speed Reading

- Managing Time and Information Effectively

Communications
- Influencing and persuading skills workshop – links to impact at committee meetings

- Media Training

- Presentation Skills

- IT support – all members who requested this had a preference for this to be delivered on a one to one basis. It would be useful to have a diagnostic questionnaire in place to analyse skill level in order to target the training effectively. This may be useful for all members.

There are many ways in which the above learning can be effectively delivered and advice has been provided to staff for consideration.

Monitoring and Reviewing of PDP's

Members PDP's are a joint responsibility and it is critical that the authority maintains a watchful and supportive role. Making a clear decision and communicating to all members how and when reviews will be carried out is important.   Defining a mechanism for mapping the current progress of each members' PDP is also vital.

It is suggested that an annual review takes place, either face to face or by questionnaire to review progress against identified needs, evaluate development that has taken place and consider changes to future learning and development needs. The approach may also vary between newly elected members and more experienced members.

The authority may consider the timing of future development planning to ensure it is conducted at the most appropriate time.

Best practice guidelines to take member development forward

It is important that the authority takes a strategic approach to member development and that development opportunities flow from an agreed member learning and development strategy and policy.   This not only provides evidence of the authority's ownership and commitment to member development; it helps members appreciate the importance of their development, the support they will receive, and identifies and clarifies where resources should be targeted. A clear, member led learning and development policy and strategy can help in ensuring that the needs of members are addressed in a timely and flexible manner.
It is also important to consider within the strategy how the authority will support the leadership and any relevant succession planning opportunities that demonstrate what approach will be taken to develop members into taking on leading roles.

The annual training programme that will be produced should contain the following elements of member learning and development across the authority:

- Authority – what the authority recommends in order keeping members up to date and moving forward with the business of the authority and any development all members need to undertake, e.g. external advocacy/community leadership.
- Functional – linked to specific committees/roles, e.g. planning, scrutiny,
- Individual – personal skills that help members carry out their roles, e.g. chairing skills, influencing skills.

Ensuring that in the design of the programme and the process, in outlining details of the various learning options and/or workshops available, the benefits of what the learning aims and objectives will achieve, are clearly stated. There is also an opportunity to target members directly from the needs on their personal development plan to the opportunities available. Making the links before the development takes place aids evaluating the effectiveness of the development afterwards, (from a member, authority and where appropriate community perspective) and ensures a focus on outcomes as well as outputs.

Further support and guidance is available to the authority in respect of undertaking a diagnostic check against the east midlands regional charter standards, to which the authority has already taken proactive steps.

Appendix 1 – Learning Style

Reflector
They will need time to think and consider all possible angles and implications before making a decision and moving forward. They tend to adopt a lower profile but when they act they will have considered the past as well as the future.

Effective development for this type of learning preference would offer reflection time on past experience and the opportunity to consider the impact of new training/development on what they are doing or trying to achieve. This might include:

- One to one discussions and feedback
- Mentor relationships
- Informative training with opportunity for discussion and looking at past experience
- Sharing good practice and learning from others
- Conferences
- Being coached or mentored
- Opportunities for reflection

Pragmatist
They are the type of people who return from courses full of ideas and want to try them out straight away. They like to get straight to the point and act quickly and confidently on ideas that attract them. Pragmatists are essentially down to earth people who like making practical decisions and solving problems. They are more comfortable with things that they know are going to work.

Effective development for this type of learning preference would include plenty of opportunity to test out their ideas in an environment where clear parameters are set. This might include:

- Practical case study or any situation where they can try things out for themselves
- Opportunities to then try out what they have learnt quite quickly
- One to one discussions
- Learning that has obvious practical advantages, i.e. how to save time, how to deal with awkward people and where these benefits are made clear.

Theorist
They are more likely to take a step by step approach and will rationalise all information they are given. They have an analytical mind and will want to make sense and logic of the information placed before them. They also like to have enough information to make a rational response and may favour more information than a reflector.

Effective development for this type of learning preference would include being presented with logical, thought-provoking information that can be applied in a rational way to what they are doing or trying to achieve. For example:

- Good base line information
- Clear presentation of where information has come from and the context for recommendations
- A combination of information and practical applications – case studies
- Learning from experiences /sharing good practice from others
- Brainstorming
- Researching and Informal Personal Study – reading journals and books
- Conferences
- Question and answer sessions

Activist
They thrive on the challenges of new experiences and like to be fully involved. They revel in coping with crises but once the excitement has died down they like to move on because they get bored with implementation and longer term consolidation. They learn best when there is a wide range of new experiences, problems and opportunities to tackle and when they are thrown in at the deep end with a task they think is difficult.

Effective development for this type of learning preference would include:

- Being given free reign to generate ideas and the opportunity to talk
- Shorter bursts/sound bites/briefing session
- One to One and Group Discussions
- Being given the lead for a project or task