

**AGENDA ITEM No. 14**

**PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETING**

**24 SEPTEMBER 2010**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**PART A**

**1. INTERPRETATION FRAMEWORK PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY (A.697/EM)**

**Purpose of the report**

1. This report seeks approval for the adoption of an interpretation framework for the National Park Authority.

**Recommendations**

2. **1. That members approve the interpretation framework at Appendix One.**

**How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?**

3. The Interpretation Framework contributes to Outcome 8 (Promoting Understanding) of the National Park Management Plan, through the provision of clear guidance on the delivery and direction of the Authority's contribution to interpretation within the National Park. The Interpretation Framework will ensure greater coherency in the delivery of messages and prioritisation of both audience and location. As the Interpretation Framework develops it will also contribute to Outcome 9 (People and Communities) by providing a support system for organisations and community groups interested in developing local interpretation projects.  
For the Authority's work, interpretation is an essential cross-cutting activity that is fundamental to delivering National Park purposes. Consequently, interpretation-based outcomes and actions are included in several strategies and plans, including: .

- Working with People and Communities Strategy
- Biodiversity Action Plan
- Cultural Heritage Strategy
- Landscape Strategy
- Recreation Strategy

The Interpretation Framework also contributes to the Authority's Corporate Objectives 08/1: Increase understanding of the special qualities of the National Park through participation in learning and volunteering opportunities, especially among target priority audiences, 08/2: Secure long term learning delivery partnerships at key locations across the Park and 09/1: Engage communities and support them in shaping their future.

**Background**

4. Management Team approved a decision to carry out a review of Authority-based interpretation (Resources Management Team, May and August 2009) led by an internal project steering group, with the input of a consultant.

5. The Communities Policy Team has recently undertaken a review of the Authority's approach to interpretation within the National Park, taking the opportunity to revisit and reconsider the Peak District Interpretation Strategy (2000) [http://www.peak-experience.org.uk/downloads/Interp\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.peak-experience.org.uk/downloads/Interp_strategy.pdf). The Strategy gives partners a clear strategic overview, but does not provide a structure for developing and delivering the Authority's own interpretation work.
6. The review process did confirm that much of the Peak District Interpretation Strategy is still relevant and therefore must remain in place as an overarching document. However, it was identified that a framework of support is needed to enable staff to plan for interpretation. A draft framework has now been produced (Appendices 1-3 of this report) that will support staff in implementing interpretation and ensure that consistent messages are being given to the public. If the draft framework is approved by the Authority it will become part of the existing Peak District Interpretation Strategy.
7. The Authority's Interpretation Manager has previously been responsible for management and delivery of interpretation through the Peak District Interpretation Partnership (PDIP). The review process presented the Authority with an opportunity to reconsider the role of the PDIP in consultation with existing core partners.

The interpretation review drew on experiences of staff and partners through workshops facilitated by the consultant. The final Interpretation Review Report provided by the consultant concluded the following key points:

*'In the internal stakeholders workshop it was clear that that despite a genuine enthusiasm amongst managers for interpreting the National Park, staff did not find the complex policy framework helpful at a practical level for interpretation planning and delivery.*

*'A further, overarching issue that became apparent in the internal stakeholders workshop was the lack of leadership in terms of good, creative interpretation programming (the need for a coordinated approach, a core programme and clarity on the roles of external organisations were recurrent themes).'*

Consultation with external partners revealed that the work of the PDIP is highly valued and most feel that the Peak District National Park Authority has a responsibility, as an 'umbrella' organisation to facilitate partner-led interpretation. However, partners wanted the PDIP to widen its membership, with a greater number of groups and organisations represented. Annually, a calendar of events could be organised to showcase best practice, share learning on new technologies and network opportunities to trigger local interpretative partnerships and joint funding opportunities. PDIP continues to be an important element of the Authority's proposed interpretation framework and we continue to work with partners to develop the future role and functionality of the PDIP.

10. Strategic Management Team (December 2009) agreed with the recommendations of the Interpretation Review Report. A further set of actions were subsequently agreed by the project steering group, as outlined below.
11. The Authority and its partners have benefited from quite significant amounts of external funding in this area in the past. Now faced with the challenge of contracting public sector finances this Interpretation Framework will help to ensure the quality and consistency of interpretation of the National Park's special qualities in an efficient and effective manner. It will enable the Authority to use its relatively small interpretation capacity to maximum benefit, by efficiently promoting good practice and sound advice using web-based resources as well as building on a network of experienced internal 'Interpretation Champions' and the external group of partners.

## Proposals

12. The interpretation toolkit will provide Peak District National Park Authority staff with a high quality set of guidelines, by embedding a range of methodology to support interpretation planning work across the organisation. It will be an accessible web-based document (Appendix 4) that will give more Authority staff the opportunity to contribute to interpretation in the National Park. By using existing resources in a more efficient and effective way, the toolkit will widen the scope of interpretation by improving current activity and seeking to develop new projects in partnership with other organisations.
13. A network of interpretation champions will be trained in areas including interpretative planning and new media applications to raise the standard of skills internally. This approach, further consolidated by a change in emphasis from costly media such as panels to new media and face-to-face interpretation, will ensure that interpretation can be delivered 'in-house' therefore reducing the Authority's reliance on external contractors. A series of staff training sessions will be programmed during 2010/2011 to ensure that the new interpretation framework is embedded across the organisation.
14. The toolkit is flexible in terms of audience and will ultimately be available to partners and community groups within the context of the National Park Management Plan. A wider use of the toolkit will enable the Authority to provide a steer on interpretation delivery within the Park.
15. Consider the Authority's vision for interpretation, definition of interpretation and aims in terms of developing and delivering interpretation (see Appendix 3).
16. Develop a system that manages interpretation within an agreed framework taking into account corporate and partner priorities, site categorisation, key messages and priority audiences.
17. Co-ordinate a joint interpretation work plan that meets the objectives and responsibilities of the Authority and, where appropriate the corporate objectives of partners too.

### **Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?**

18. **Financial:**  
The financial implications associated with resourcing the current interpretation team is a separate issue relating to the future shape of the Authority. The recommendation of this report does not have any direct cost implications at this stage. It is proposed that the interpretation framework will provide the Authority with a streamlined, cross-cutting approach to interpretation development and delivery, therefore ensuring a greater consistency and efficiency in approach.
19. **Risk Management:**  
The Interpretation Framework provides a system to manage risk in terms of establishing a control or intervention points within potential interpretation projects. On an Authority-wide scale, by developing a three to five year interpretation plan, projects will be integrated where possible to reduce cost and use of resources.

20. **Sustainability:**  
Issues surrounding sustainability have been addressed through the following elements of the toolkit:

- A site category grid
- An evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of interpretative media

21. **Background papers** [List below]  
The consultant's final report: Interpretation Review Recommendations and Framework, is available from Emma Martin (Communities Policy Manager) [Emma.Martin@peakdistrict.gov.uk](mailto:Emma.Martin@peakdistrict.gov.uk) or Catherine Bowmer (Interpretation Manager) [Catherine.Bowmer@peakdistrict.gov.uk](mailto:Catherine.Bowmer@peakdistrict.gov.uk) .

**Appendices**

Appendix One: Overall Interpretation Framework

Appendix Two: Overview of the Interpretation Toolkit for the Authority, to be further demonstrated through a presentation.

Appendix Three: Peak District National Park Authority's Vision, Definition and Aims for Interpretation

Appendix Four: Examples of pages from the web-based interpretation toolkit

**Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date**

Emma Martin, Communities Policy Manager, 16 September 2010