

11. TRAILS MASTER PLAN (MB)

1. Purpose of the report

The Authority owns an outstanding network of trails and this report has been initiated in response to the need to ensure the long-term sustainability of the trails network. It draws on the Authority's expertise but has been prepared for us by external consultants. It examined the financial viability of current operational and management procedures and drew up concepts for potential future development. The full report will be considered in Part B because it refers in some detail to values, income, financial strategies and the Authority's commercial interests. This covering report describes for a wider audience the overall summary of the report.

2. Recommendations

1. Members are asked to note this report.

3. How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

This report contributes to the following Authority's Corporate Objectives:

4. Lead a programme to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the National Park and adapt to climate change by inspiring and enabling others and through direct actions in our own operations.

6. Support a sustainable economy by working with businesses and other agencies, particularly focusing our efforts on environmental management.

8. Provide and enable recreation services that promote health benefits, widen participation, reduce impact on the environment and manage conflicts between users.

9. Support the development of a coherent and successful Peak District tourism sector which takes account of the needs of the environment, local residents, local businesses and visitors.

12. Develop an approach to income generation to harness a more entrepreneurial focus on service delivery that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.

The Master Plan also delivers on a number of National Park Management outcomes as follows:

DL4: Greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced and a healthy national park will adapt to the effects of climate change

TV2: Communities and individuals will feel inspired to live sustainably and help shape the place they live in

TV3: Residents will have sustainable access to local services and employment

WI1: The national park will strengthen its role as a welcoming place and premier destination, synonymous with escape, adventure, enjoyment and sustainability

WI2: The Peak District will be an unrivalled setting for opportunities which enable people to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the place, and which instil a desire to contribute to the conservation, community and economy of the national park.

WI3: Visitors and residents will be inspired to act in a way that sustains the environment and the special qualities of the Peak District

WI4: Accessible and diverse recreation opportunities will be available for all, encouraging healthy living, enjoyment of the landscape and a sense of adventure

ES2: There will be a diversity of thriving businesses supporting and contributing to the economy and local communities which are critical to the long term future of the national park

ES4: Traditional and modern economic development that is innovative, well managed and appropriate to the landscape will be supported

The National Park Management Plan Signature Destination Pedal Peak District gathers appropriate actions related to cycling.

4. Government guidance on asset management has in recent years moved from a mandatory to an advisory nature. CIPFA says: *Good asset management plans should include a strategy for dealing with acquisitions, disposals, lease negotiation and asset maintenance, as well as indicators to measure the performance of a council's assets. Councils are also responsible for managing assets and they should be incorporated in the plans within the appropriate asset category. The plans should be based on business and customer service delivery needs, as the right assets in the right place can make the difference between good and poor service delivery.*

Background

5. The Trails Management Plan (2012) identified a future challenging funding climate for the continued maintenance and operation of its trails network. This resulted in a commission to Atkins Ltd and the Leisure Consultancy to develop a financially viable way forward for the trails that would assist the Authority to fulfil its responsibilities of protecting the special qualities of the National Park and maximise access to this important landscape. An options appraisal was considered the best approach to examining the current trails offer and in bringing together concept ideas for potential future development that would support income generating opportunities to fund the long-term operational management of the trails network.
The report revealed the popular use of the trails by both residents and visitors alike; that users did spend on facilities available to them on the trails (cycle hire, shops and tearooms etc.); and that the unique selling point of the trails is their extensive off-road routes that allow people to enjoy the countryside of the National Park and undertake leisure activities (walking, cycling, riding and running) in a safe and traffic free environment.

This has proven to be an opportune time in which to explore enhancements to the leisure trails and particularly cycling provision. British success in winning Le Tour de France in 2012 and 2013; huge successes at the London Olympic Games 2012; and the two major international cycling events in the UK in 2014, L'Eroica based in the Peak District and Le Tour de France, Le Grand Depart starting from Leeds travelling through the Peak District on day two. This coupled with the Department for Transport's grant to support cycling in National Parks offers a good opportunity to invest in the trails network and to make the Peak Park a "must visit" destination for cycling and exploring the countryside. There is an increased national interest in cycling with sales of cycles outstripping car sales in 2012.

The scope of the work is the four trails that are directly managed by the Authority:

- Thornhill
- Monsal

- High Peak
- Tissington

Collectively these trails provide approximately 34 miles of off-road cycling within the National Park and connect into many of the longer-distance more extensive trails networks. The trails originally were part of the railway network in the region and provide an excellent environment for new cyclists; group gatherings; events and multi-uses. The fact that the trails are traffic-free in a safe and attractive environment makes them highly popular and well used, both by resident and visitors.

It was considered that the draw of users was due to the fact that they provide a relatively cheap day out – only having to pay for car parking or transport to the trails – the trails are free to use, but require the Authority to find considerable amount of money for structural inspections and repairs (especially the Monsal Tunnels); trails re-surfacing; managing cycle hire business premises and many other operational and management responsibilities.

The research examined: budgets and financial performance; staffing; properties owned by the Authority on the trails: services and facilities on offer to the users; current tourism markets, both to the Peak Park as well as more specialist leisure activities of cycling holidays. Branding and marketing position was assessed as part of the understanding stage. This was then put in the context of planning responsibilities and other strategies currently in development, including the Wider Cycling Strategy, as well as the department of Transport's (DfT) fund for supporting National Parks. The options appraisal set out the findings from this research and examined each option in respect of the likely capital investment required and a conservative estimate of potential future income that could be achieved.

Proposals

6. The report from Atkins is attached in full in the Part B report, see Item 13 of the agenda.
7. The report is a very good basis for the development of our Trails and provides a strong basis for making strategic decisions about the Trails network. However, for this to be an Asset Management Plan which can be delivered confidently a number of further steps are required, namely:

The conclusions were that the Miller's Dale Station site (Monsal Trail) and Parsley Hay (High Peak Trail) were good opportunities for development and would be the shorter term top priorities. The development options at Bakewell Station (Monsal Trail) and Mapleton Lane (Tissington Trail) were identified as of lower priority, but could be considered in the longer-term. Options to enhance and re-develop Fairholmes will form part of the discussions with the owners, Severn Trent, as part of their joint management of the site with the Authority.

The recommendations and concept ideas are represented as a sound basis from which to explore further feasibility and master planning. The Action Plan offers a staged approach to implement these recommendations.

More reflection is required by Members on the conclusions of this report and the strategic steer they wish to give, exploring in some more detail certain recommendations. It is proposed that this will happen initially at a member workshop in the autumn.

Once members have provided their steer on the draft Action Plan and the Chief Finance Officer has been consulted on the fit with the Action Plan to the Authority's

Capital Strategy, a report will be brought to the Audit, Resources and Performance Committee which will set out a definitive Action Plan. This will, where necessary, take additional information not contained within the Atkins work, for example, on the condition of property or external funding opportunities and integrate this information into the plans.

8. Members will play a key role in accepting the Atkins report as the basis of this work. They will then participate in a workshop before signing off the action plan. Members will then agree and subsequently monitor the Trails Business Plan. Throughout this time, members with a particular interest in the trails, the Chair of the Authority and Chair of ARP and the Lead Member for Asset Management will be fully involved in this work.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

9. **Financial:** None that are not covered in the report. The implementation of the final plan will be dependent on the agreed capital strategy.
10. **Risk Management:** This has been incorporated into the detailed work for each of the main areas of assets
11. **Sustainability:** None other than those considered as part of the assets review
12. **Background papers** (not previously published) – None

Appendices – Part B: Item 13 - The Atkins Report

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

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