Volunteers

Peak District National Park Authority

Internal Audit Report 2018/19

Business Unit: Commercial Development & Outreach,
Responsible Officer: Director of Commercial Development and Engagement
Service Manager: Head of Engagement
Date Issued: 25 April 2019
Status: Final
Reference: 69158/001

	P1	P2	P3
Actions	0	0	4
Overall Audit Opinion	Reasonable Assurance		

Summary and Overall Conclusions

Introduction

The Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) has a statutory role to conserve and enhance the special qualities of, and also encourage enjoyment and understanding of the National Park delivered in line with corporate strategy objectives.

Volunteers are a key resource for the PDNPA. A wide spectrum of opportunities are available to authority volunteers, from conservation to project work. In order to ensure that volunteers can safely and successfully make their contribution to the achievement of authority objectives, it is imperative that their work is directed by effective policies and procedures.

The PDNPA has a pool of approximately 600 volunteers. It is calculated that 7,000 volunteer days were worked on behalf of the National Park Authority during the year 17/18.

Objectives and Scope of the Audit

The purpose of this audit was to provide assurance to management that procedures and controls within the system ensured that:
- There were effective policies and procedures in place for volunteers;
- Arrangements were in place to ensure volunteers abide by relevant procedures.
- Volunteers were strategically managed to best achieve authority objectives;

Key Findings

The Peak District National Park Authority volunteers service are currently going through a transitional phase and are in the early days of looking at the strategic management of the volunteers service. This includes the roll out of a new online volunteer management system (Better Impact). It is anticipated that the roll out of Better Impact will be completed by June 2019. The Authority is already aware there are a number of gaps that need closing and it is hoped that Better Impact will improve and automate current systems and processes.

There are a variety of policies, procedures and guidance documents for volunteers and these are stored on the intranet Hub. As part of the roll out for Better Impact the Authority could take this opportunity to review all relevant volunteer policies, procedures and guidance to ensure they reflect current working practices.

A formal record is not kept centrally to show that volunteers have read/received all of the necessary policies and procedures applicable to their role. Therefore, it was not possible to confirm in our testing if staff had the appropriate training, completed and read the required forms, and had the required supervision/interactions with management as per the volunteer guidelines.

The audit found that DBS checks had been completed for all volunteers whose role falls into regulated activity (PPCV supervisor volunteers and Junior Ranger supervisor volunteers). The Authority's safeguarding policy commits to re-checking DBS every 3 years. The Authority is in the process of re-checking longer serving volunteers and these have been recently chased up. A sample of volunteers who do duty mileage was also checked to ensure that driving licence checks were being retained and no issues were found.

The Authority is in the process of doing a piece of work on the strategic management of the volunteering service, which is being considered as part of the Corporate Strategy for 2019/24. So far there has been some strategic thinking around volunteering, however, this strategic approach is still in the early stages and there are no formalised arrangements in place. Once a strategy for volunteering has been agreed the Authority needs to be clear in how they are going to resource it to ensure that objectives are achieved and the service continues to be managed appropriately and effectively.

A structured approach has not been taken in identifying volunteering outcomes and the Authority recognises that this is an area for development. Currently the service only reports on number of volunteer days. The Authority has also started to collect data on the monetary value of volunteering under the new Corporate Strategy. Performance indicators could be developed further that are both qualitative and quantitative to better capture the true outcomes and achievements of the volunteer service to both the Authority and the individuals themselves.

A risk register for volunteering had not been completed prior to the audit. Since the audit commenced the Head of Engagement has started to compile a risk register but this requires further development. A good awareness of risks associated with volunteering has been demonstrated so far.

A variety of methods for advertising volunteering opportunities is documented in the guidance document 'how to advertise your volunteer opportunity'. The authority uses social media and there is an Instagram, Facebook and Twitter page for Peak Park Conservation Volunteers (PPCV). The Authority may wish to consider making a volunteer page for the wider volunteer demographic to increase their social media presence.

Overall Conclusions

It was found that the arrangements for managing risk were satisfactory with a number of weaknesses identified. An acceptable control environment is in operation but there are a number of improvements that could be made. Our overall opinion of the controls within the system at the time of the audit was that they provided Reasonable Assurance.

1 Strategic Management of Volunteering

Issue/Control Weakness	Risk
The Authority is in the process of doing a piece of work on the strategic management of the volunteering service. However, this strategic approach is still in the early stages and there are no formalised arrangements in place.	Volunteers fail to contribute to authority objectives.

Findings

The Authority is in the process of doing a piece of work on the strategic management of the volunteering service, which is being considered as part of the Corporate Strategy for 2019/24. However, this strategic approach is still in the early stages and there are no formalised arrangements in place.

So far there has been some strategic thinking around volunteering such as looking to meet diverse needs, widening the 'offer'/volunteering opportunities to all, including training opportunities, and identifying and creating new, less typical, roles for volunteers across the Authority such as charity/fundraising ambassadors and office based work.

As part of strategic thinking and workforce planning, the Authority may want to consider conducting a staffing analysis to examine where volunteers could be used elsewhere across Directorates to help achieve business/strategic goals and how many they would like to recruit. This would require all Directorates to get involved in identifying where volunteers could be used. It may be beneficial to include volunteers in all service plans to help with this strategic thinking. This is something which the Head of Engagement has already identified as an improvement.

A strategic lead Blueprint/action plan has been drafted which documents recommendations for development of volunteering. The plan outlines what the service wants to achieve with volunteering, how this can be achieved, responsibilities and timescales. Once the plan is finalised the service will need to monitor its effect and outline a clear way of measuring whether it has been achieved.

There is currently limited capacity to complete the large amount of work that needs to be accomplished, including the ongoing support/monitoring of volunteers that will need to be done. The work currently is being completed as part of the Head of Engagement's overall role. An Outreach Development Support Worker has recently been employed who is the dedicated resource to help roll out Better Impact. Once a strategy for volunteering has been agreed the Authority needs to be clear in how they are going to resource it to ensure that objectives are achieved and to provide ongoing oversight of volunteering across the organisation.

Agreed Action 1.1

This will form part of the new Volunteer coordinators work. We hope this new post will be filled by July 2019 when they will be able to deliver actions from the Volunteer Blue print. Working with other Heads of service and managers to identify new volunteer opportunities and add this into service/delivery plans for 2020/21.

It will be the responsibility of this post to develop, deliver and monitor the volunteer programme to support the corporate objectives for 2019-24.

This role will also need to work with teams across the Authority to identify how volunteering will be resourced, if it will be from existing budgets or other funding opportunities as appropriate to the role.

Priority	3
Responsible Officer	Director of Commercial Development and Engagement and Head of Engagement
Timescale	30 April 2020

2 Outcomes and Performance Indicators

Issue/Control Weakness	Risk
Outcomes have been documented for volunteering, albeit not as meaningful as they could be. Meaningful and robust performance indicators should be in place to measure volunteering.	The true impacts, outcomes and performance of the volunteer service cannot be measured fully.

Findings

A structured approach has not been taken in identifying volunteering outcomes and the Authority recognises that this is an area for development. The Authority needs to determine how best to measure the impacts and outcomes achieved through the use of volunteers.

Performance indicators should be set in the context of the Authorities strategy and objectives. Once the service has identified its information requirements for measuring performance, this can be built into the new Better Impact system to ensure data is collected as efficiently as possible for monitoring and reporting purposes. Currently the service only reports on number of volunteer days which does not fully capture the true outcomes of the volunteer service. Performance indicators could be developed further that are both quantitative and qualitative to reflect the outcomes and achievements of the volunteer service to both the Authority and the individuals themselves. Under the new Corporate Strategy the Authority will report on monetary value to give a baseline from a best estimate around the % of the type of work done using HLF definitions and value. This has started to be documented, for example for 2018/19 in Q2 £406,220 for 3669.2 days work.

The Authority could benchmark and liaise with other organisations further afield who are considered 'best in class' regarding volunteering, to compare what performance indicators they are using.

Agreed Action 2.1

We feel the new corporate KPI's are a robust way of recording volunteer outcomes. They make significant progress on counting volunteer days only as they now account for the value of the support using HLF guidance so a better understanding of the support volunteers give the Authority will be monitored from April 2019.

New ways to tell the story of what volunteers deliver on the ground will be part of the new volunteer coordinator role, and is built in to the Blueprint plan. This will be trialled in 2019/20 and will form part of how the volunteer programme is monitored rather than reporting KPI's. | **Priority** | 3 |
| | **Responsible Officer** | Director of Commercial Development and Engagement and Head of Engagement |
| | **Timescale** | 30 April 2020 |

3 Risk Register

Issue/Control Weakness	Risk
A complete risk register for volunteering was not in place.	Risk is not being formally considered for volunteering. Actions to address risks cannot be determined.

Findings

A complete risk register categorises and prioritises risks and will help to determine and manage the effectiveness of the actions to help address the risks/make improvements. As the Authority works with approximately 600 volunteers there are organisational risks that need to be identified and managed appropriately.

A risk register for volunteering had not been completed prior to the audit. Since the audit commenced the Head of Engagement has started to compile a risk register but this requires further development such as complete documentation of risks, controls, risk mitigation, scoring etc. The draft risk register was reviewed and so far this document demonstrates a good awareness of the key risks facing the volunteering service.

Once the risk register has been completed this needs to be treated as a 'live' document which is updated and reviewed on a regular basis. It is important that there is a feedback process in place to identify emerging risks.

Agreed Action 3.1

A volunteer risk register is now complete and forms part of our cycle of corporate strategy monitoring.	Priority	3
	Responsible Officer	Director of Commercial Development and Engagement and Head of Engagement
	Timescale	Completed

PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK

4 Policies and Procedures

Issue/Control Weakness	Risk
As part of the roll out of Better Impact volunteer policies, procedures and guidance documents should be reviewed and updated as necessary. Assurance cannot be given that volunteers have read/confirmed their understanding of policies and procedures.	Volunteers are not managed appropriately and are not informed how to carry out their role.

Findings

A wide variety of policies, procedures and guidance documents are available for volunteering including recruitment, management and information for volunteers. For example, the Volunteer Agreement (2018), Volunteering Policy (2018), Volunteer Induction Checklist (2017), Useful Information for Volunteers (2018) and Volunteer Managers Guidelines (2017).

It is anticipated that Better Impact should be rolled out by June 2019 and therefore the Authority should take this opportunity to review all relevant volunteer policies, procedures and guidance to ensure they reflect current working practices.

Furthermore, a formal record is not kept centrally to show that volunteers have read/confirmed all of the necessary policies and procedures applicable to their role. Therefore, it was not possible to confirm in our testing if staff had the appropriate training, completed and read the required forms, and had the required supervision/interactions with management as per the volunteer guidelines. Going forward, Better Impact could be used to monitor volunteers reading and understanding and completion of various policies, procedures and risk assessments. For example, Better Impact can be programmed to include a tick box function for volunteers to confirm they have understood their responsibilities, however, after reviewing the current system this function is not in place. At the time of the audit we communicated a recommendation to the Head of Engagement and Outreach Development Support Worker that it would be beneficial to include this function. A system report could then be extracted to show the number and identity of volunteers who have not ticked these boxes.

Agreed Action 4.1

The role of Better Impact (BI) to monitor this will be reviewed by December 2019. It may not be reasonable to record all policies, procedures and risk assessments read (there are a significant number of these for some roles). Many will be covered in training modules. All training completed is recorded on BI and volunteers can only sign up to volunteer opportunities they are suitably trained for.	**Priority**	3
	Responsible Officer	Director of Commercial Development and Engagement and Head of Engagement
	Timescale	31 December 2019

Annex 1

Audit Opinions and Priorities for Actions

Audit Opinions
Audit work is based on sampling transactions to test the operation of systems. It cannot guarantee the elimination of fraud or error. Our opinion is based on the risks we identify at the time of the audit. Our overall audit opinion is based on 5 grades of opinion, as set out below.

Opinion	Assessment of internal control
High Assurance	Overall, very good management of risk. An effective control environment appears to be in operation.
Substantial Assurance	Overall, good management of risk with few weaknesses identified. An effective control environment is in operation but there is scope for further improvement in the areas identified.
Reasonable Assurance	Overall, satisfactory management of risk with a number of weaknesses identified. An acceptable control environment is in operation but there are a number of improvements that could be made.
Limited Assurance	Overall, poor management of risk with significant control weaknesses in key areas and major improvements required before an effective control environment will be in operation.
No Assurance	Overall, there is a fundamental failure in control and risks are not being effectively managed. A number of key areas require substantial improvement to protect the system from error and abuse.

Priorities for Actions	
Priority 1	A fundamental system weakness, which presents unacceptable risk to the system objectives and requires urgent attention by management.
Priority 2	A significant system weakness, whose impact or frequency presents risks to the system objectives, which needs to be addressed by management.
Priority 3	The system objectives are not exposed to significant risk, but the issue merits attention by management.

PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK

PEAK
DISTRICT
NATIONAL
PARK