

Annual Audit Letter

Peak District National Park Authority
Year ended 31 March 2019

Appendix 1





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Our reports are prepared in the context of the 'Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies' issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd. Reports and letters prepared by appointed auditors and addressed to members or officers are prepared for the sole use of the Authority and we take no responsibility to any member or officer in their individual capacity or to any third party.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Annual Audit Letter

Our Annual Audit Letter summarises the work we have undertaken as the auditor for Peak District National Park Authority for the year ended 31 March 2019. Although this letter is addressed to the Authority, it is designed to be read by a wider audience including members of the public and other external stakeholders.

Our responsibilities are defined by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office (the NAO). The detailed sections of this letter provide details on those responsibilities, the work we have done to discharge them, and the key findings arising from our work. These are summarised below.

Area of responsibility	Summary
Audit of the financial statements	<p>Our auditor's report issued on 30 July 2019 included our opinion that the financial statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• give a true and fair view of the Authority's financial position as at 31 March 2019 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and• have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19.
Other information published alongside the audited financial statements	<p>Our auditor's report issued on 30 July 2019 included our opinion that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the other information in the Statement of Accounts is consistent with the audited financial statements.
Value for Money conclusion	<p>Our auditor's report concluded that we are satisfied that in all significant respects, the Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2019.</p>
Reporting to the group auditor	<p>In line with group audit instructions issued by the NAO, on 30 July 2019 we reported to the group auditor in line with the requirements applicable to the Authority's Whole of Government Accounts return.</p>
Statutory reporting	<p>Our auditor's report confirmed that we did not use our powers under s24 of the 2014 Act to issue a report in the public interest or to make written recommendations to the Authority.</p>

2. AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Opinion on the financial statements	Unqualified
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The scope of our audit and the results of our work

The purpose of our audit is to provide reasonable assurance to users that the financial statements are free from material error. We do this by expressing an opinion on whether the statements are prepared, in all material respects, in line with the financial reporting framework applicable to the Authority and whether they give a true and fair view of the Authority’s financial position as at 31 March 2019 and of its financial performance for the year then ended.

Our audit was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice issued by the NAO, and International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). These require us to consider whether:

- the accounting policies are appropriate to the Authority's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed;
- the significant accounting estimates made by management in the preparation of the financial statements are reasonable; and
- the overall presentation of the financial statements provides a true and fair view.

Our auditor’s report, issued to the Authority on 30 July 2019, stated that, in our view, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the Authority’s financial position as at 31 March 2019 and of its financial performance for the year then ended.

Our approach to materiality

We apply the concept of materiality when planning and performing our audit, and when evaluating the effect of misstatements identified as part of our work. We consider the concept of materiality at numerous stages throughout the audit process, in particular when determining the nature, timing and extent of our audit procedures, and when evaluating the effect of uncorrected misstatements. An item is considered material if its misstatement or omission could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users of the financial statements.

Judgements about materiality are made in the light of surrounding circumstances and are affected by both qualitative and quantitative factors. As a result we have set materiality for the financial statements as a whole (financial statement materiality) and a lower level of materiality for specific items of account (specific materiality) due to the nature of these items or because they attract public interest. We also set a threshold for reporting identified misstatements to the Authority. We call this our trivial threshold.

The table below provides details of the materiality levels applied in the audit of the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2019:

Financial statement materiality	Our financial statement materiality is based on 2% of Gross Revenue Expenditure at a Surplus/Deficit on Provision of Services level	£329,468
Trivial threshold	Our trivial threshold is based on 3% of financial statement materiality.	£9,884
We applied a lower level of materiality to the following areas of the accounts:		
Specific materiality	• officers’ remuneration	£5,000 per individual officer
	• Members’ allowances and expenses	£15,000
	• audit fee	£2,000

2. AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

Our response to significant risks

As part of our continuous planning procedures, we considered whether there were risks of material misstatement in the Authority's financial statements that required special audit consideration. We reported significant risks identified at the planning stage to the Authority in our Audit Strategy Memorandum and provided details of how we responded to those risks in our Audit Completion Report. The table below outlines the identified significant risks, the work we carried out on those risks and our conclusions.

Identified significant risk	Our response	Our findings and conclusions
<p>Management override of controls</p> <p>Management at various levels within an organisation are in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur there is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud on all audits.</p>	<p>We addressed this risk by performing audit work in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• documenting our understanding of the processes and controls in place to mitigate the risks identified;• testing the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements;• evaluating the business rationale for any significant transactions outside the course of the business;• understanding the oversight given by those charged with governance of management process over fraud;• making enquiries of management and Internal Audit regarding actual or any suspicions of fraud; and• considering whether the Authority's accounting policies are consistent with industry standards.	<p>There were no matters arising from our work on management override of controls.</p>
<p>Valuation of property, plant and equipment</p> <p>The Authority's accounts contain material balances and disclosures relating to its holding of property, plant and equipment, investment properties and assets held for sale, with the majority of land and building assets required to be carried at valuation. Due to high degree of estimation uncertainty associated with those held at valuation, we determined there is a significant risk in this area.</p>	<p>We addressed this risk through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reconciling valuations from the valuer's report to those recorded in the Fixed Asset Register;• testing a sample of assets valued during the year to valuation reports;• where material, testing the basis for impairment of assets, the value and correct accounting treatment;• critically assessing the Authority's valuer's scope of work and methodology used; and• considering the impact of any assets not valued during the year.	<p>The procedures we have undertaken have not identified any material errors or uncertainties in the financial statements.</p>

2. AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

Identified significant risk	Our response	Our findings and conclusions
<p>Defined benefit liability valuation</p> <p>The Authority's accounts contain material liabilities relating to the local government pension scheme. The Authority uses an actuary to provide an annual valuation of these liabilities in line with the requirements of IAS 19 Employee Benefits. Due to the high degree of estimation uncertainty (and GMP/McCloud considerations) associated with this valuation, we determined there was a significant risk in this area.</p>	<p>We addressed this risk through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reviewing the appropriateness of the Pension Asset and Liability valuation methodologies applied by the Pension Fund Actuary, and the key assumptions included within the valuation. This included comparing them to expected ranges, utilising information provided by the consulting actuary engaged by the National Audit Office;• agreeing the data in the IAS 19 valuation report provided by the Fund Actuary for accounting purposes to the pension accounting entries and disclosures in the Authority's financial statements;• critically assessing the competency, objectivity and independence of the Derbyshire Pension Fund's Actuary, Hymans Robertson;• liaising with the auditors of the Derbyshire Pension Fund to gain assurance that the controls in place at the Pension Fund are operating effectively. This included the processes and controls in place to ensure data provided to the Actuary by the Pension Fund for the purposes of the IAS 19 valuation is complete and accurate; and• performing a walkthrough of payroll transactions at the Authority to understand how pension contributions are deducted and paid to the Pension Fund by the Authority.	<p>Our work provided the assurance sought and we were satisfied the local government pensions liability was not materially misstated.</p>

2. AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Internal control recommendations

As part of our audit we considered the internal controls in place that are relevant to the preparation of the financial statements. We did this to design audit procedures that allow us to express our opinion on the financial statements, but this did not extend to us expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal controls.

Our work did not identify any internal control issues to bring to your attention



3. VALUE FOR MONEY CONCLUSION

Value for Money conclusion	Unqualified
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Our approach to Value for Money

We are required to consider whether the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The NAO issues guidance to auditors that underpins the work we are required to carry out in order to form our conclusion, and sets out the criterion and sub-criteria that we are required to consider.

The overall criterion is that, ‘in all significant respects, the Authority had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people’. To assist auditors in reaching a conclusion on this overall criterion, the following sub-criteria are set out by the NAO:

- Informed decision making;
- Sustainable resource deployment; and
- Working with partners and other third parties.

The NAO’s guidance requires us to carry out work to identify whether or not a risk to the Value for Money conclusion exists. Risk, in the context of our Value for Money work, is the risk that we come to an incorrect conclusion rather than the risk of the arrangements in place at the Authority being inadequate. In our Audit Completion Report, we reported that we had not identified any significant risks to our VFM conclusion. We did though identify one specific matter which we needed to keep to under close review: The work we completed in relation to this matter is outlined below, which supported our auditor’s report, issued to the Authority on 30 July 2019, that, in all significant respects, the Authority put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31st March 2019.

Value for Money risk

Risk	Work undertaken	Conclusion
BREXIT related scenarios – We recognise there is the potential for additional EU funding in the Authority’s external funding pipeline and there may be some potential BREXIT related scenarios where any additional EU funding is at risk. However, we are also aware of the undertakings being afforded to national park authorities by central government. It is our understanding that the Treasury has guaranteed funding for successful bids for EU funding until the end of 2020 and that applicants will receive their full financial allocation and will continue to receive funding over a project’s lifetime. Against this backdrop and the relatively sound financial position of the Peak District National Park Authority we have not identified a significant VFM risk.	We have assessed whether any matters have come to our attention through the course of our audit that lead us to conclude that a risk to our 2018/19 VFM conclusion does indeed exist. We addressed this requirement by reviewing the Authority’s arrangements for developing and delivering its MTFP and for working in partnership.	We obtained sufficient assurance to conclude that the Authority continues to have appropriate arrangements in place.



4. OTHER REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Exercise of statutory reporting powers	No matters to report
Completion of group audit reporting requirements	Consistent
Other information published alongside the audited financial statements	Consistent

The NAO's Code of Audit Practice and the 2014 Act place wider reporting responsibilities on us, as the Authority's external auditor. We set out below, the context of these reporting responsibilities and our findings for each.

Matters on which we report by exception

The 2014 Act provides us with specific powers where matters come to our attention that, in our judgement, require reporting action to be taken. We have the power to:

- issue a report in the public interest;
- make statutory recommendations that must be considered and responded to publicly;
- apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law; and
- issue an advisory notice under schedule 8 of the 2014 Act.

We have not exercised any of these statutory reporting powers.

The 2014 Act also gives rights to local electors and other parties, such as the right to ask questions of the auditor and the right to make an objection to an item of account. We did not receive any questions or objections that meet the criteria involved.

Reporting to the NAO in respect of Whole of Government Accounts consolidation data

The NAO, as group auditor, requires us to complete the WGA Assurance Statement in respect of its consolidation data. We submitted this information to the NAO on 30 July 2019.

Other information published alongside the financial statements

The Code of Audit Practice requires us to consider whether information published alongside the financial statements is consistent with those statements and our knowledge and understanding of the Authority. In our opinion, the other information in the Statement of Accounts is consistent with the audited financial statements.

5. OUR FEES

Fees for work as the Authority's auditor

We reported our proposed fees for the delivery of our work in the Audit Strategy Memorandum, presented to the Authority in March 2019.

We have completed our work for the 2018/19 financial year, but at the time of producing this report, we have not yet finalised our audit fees for the year. We are proposing an additional fee of £750 in relation to the work associated with the GMP/McCloud pension liability issue and a further additional fee of £750 in relation to the work undertaken in relation to a letter we received from a member of the public. These variations to the final fee require the approval of Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited, which manages the contracts for our work. The fee cannot be finalised until it is approved by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited.

Area of work	2018/19 proposed fee	2018/19 final fee ***
Delivery of audit work under the NAO Code of Audit Practice	£10,209 plus VAT	£10,209 plus VAT

*** Please note that at the time of producing this report, the audit fee has not yet been finalised.

Fees for other work

We confirm that we have not undertaken any non-audit services for the Authority in the year.

6. FORWARD LOOK

Audit Developments

Code of Audit Practice

The Code of Audit Practice sets out what local auditors of relevant local public bodies are required to do to fulfil their statutory responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. We have responded to the National Audit Office’s consultation on the content of the Code (<https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/about-code/>).

A new Code will be laid in Parliament in time for it to come in to force no later than 1 April 2020.

Financial Resilience

Local Authority Financial Resilience Index

CIPFA is moving forward with its financial resilience index, which it believes will be a barometer on which local authorities will be judged. We would expect the Authority to have at least considered the index once it is formally released.

Commercialisation

The National Audit Office will be publishing a report on Commercialisation during 2019. Depending on the Authority’s appetite for Commercialisation, we would expect the Authority to consider the outcome of the report and ensure any lessons learnt are incorporated into business practice.

Further, the UK Debt Management Office’s Annual Report, published on 23 July 2019, reported that, as at 31 March 2019, the Public Works Loan Board’s loan book was £78.3 billion with 1,308 new loans totalling £9.1 billion advanced during the year. As a result, we expect local authorities to clearly demonstrate:

- the value for money in the use of Public Works Loan Board funds to acquire commercial property; and
- the arrangements for loan repayment through the updated Statutory Guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision in 2019/20, 2020/21 and beyond.

Financial Reporting

UK Local Government Annual Accounts

The CIPFA/LASAAC Local Authority Code Board specifies the financial reporting requirements for UK local government. A consultation is underway to inform the direction and strategy for local government annual accounts. We will be submitting our response and suggest practitioners also voice their opinion.

Lease accounting

The implementation of IFRS 16 Leases in the Code is delayed until 1 April 2020. The Authority will need a project plan to ensure the data analysis and evaluation of accounting entries is completed in good time to ensure any changes in both business practice and financial reporting are captured.



6. FORWARD LOOK (CONTINUED)

Next year’s audit and how we will work with the Authority

We will focus our work on the risks that your challenges present to your financial statements and your ability to maintain proper arrangements for securing value for money.

In the coming year we will continue to support the Authority by:

- continued liaison with the Authority’s Internal Auditors to minimise duplication of work;
- attending Authority meetings and presenting an Audit Progress Report including updates on regional and national developments; and
- hosting events for staff, such as our Local Government Accounts workshop.

We will meet with the Authority to identify any learning from the 2018/19 audit and will continue to share our insights from across local government and relevant knowledge from the wider public and private sector.

In terms of the technical challenges that officers face around the production of the statement of accounts, we will continue to work with them to share our knowledge of new accounting developments and we will be on hand to discuss any issues as and when they arise.

The Authority has taken a positive and constructive approach to our audit and we wish to thank Members and officers for their support and co-operation during our audit.



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