

Executive Summary: Quarter 3 Performance Report for Year 1 of the Corporate Strategy (2019/20)

Q3 overview by Chief Executive

RAG status of strategic interventions: Red = 4, Amber = 13, Green = 40, not reported this quarter = 1

During this quarter, we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Act of Parliament that created national parks in England, and it is important that we remain as relevant today as we were 70 years ago. With this in mind, it is important we look to the recommendation of the independent review of national landscapes that was published at the start of this quarter. The “Landscapes Review: Final Report” calls on national landscapes to work together to be happier, healthier, greener, more beautiful and open to everyone.

The nine English national park authorities and the Broads Authority, under the auspices of National Parks England, agreed in November to collectively call for change in four areas: for national parks to be leading nature recovery; shaping the future of farming; being national parks for everyone; and being leaders in tackling the climate change emergency. These all resonate strongly with the goals in the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan and the recommendations in the Landscapes Review. And they will require a combination of powers, partnerships, pounds and political will. We are already responding to these challenges and opportunities in the Peak District National Park.

On climate change, in October the National Park Management Plan Advisory Group hosted a Climate Change Summit in Buxton and drafted a set of actions to help us make a breakthrough in reducing carbon emissions from transport and agriculture / land management in the National Park. On the future of farming, I’m pleased to report that in Q3 we started the White Peak test of the future environmental land management scheme with Defra and we continue to do what we can to support land managers who are finding the current support system difficult. On being ‘national parks for all’, the independent audience survey report has been delivered, and this combined with other data is providing valuable evidence to help us plan our audience, marketing and communication actions and highlighting how far our resources can go to achieve a shift towards being a national park for all. This plan will be ready in the early part of 2020/21. On nature recovery, Q3 is always one of the busiest delivery quarters for our peatland restoration work and this year is no exception. So far this winter, 5.5ha of bare peat has been re-vegetated, 244ha of Sphagnum planted and 55ha of invasive species control conducted. Additionally, 274ha of non-protected, species-rich grassland has continued to be sustained and 29 ha of new native woodland has been planted/confirmed for planting this winter and spring.

Other highlights this quarter include: the launch of two important books that help us increase public awareness of cultural heritage in the PDNP - “Reading the Peak District Landscape” and “The Land that made us”; completion of a crucial piece of work to assess the state of our communities with all Parish Statements now having been drafted and work beginning to focus on quality of community engagement as well as volume; the Peak District National Park Foundation is over a third of the way to the £70k target; and, in partnership with the National Trust, the Countryside Code revamp is now underway.

The Authority received an unqualified opinion on the financial statements and satisfied the External Auditor that proper arrangements are in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in our use of resources. However, this does not mean we are complacent. For example, this quarter saw us updating our medium term financial plan and seeking assurances from Defra about the size of next year’s National Park Grant.

Appendix 1a: Executive Summary: Quarter 3 Performance Report for 2019/20

Looking ahead, at the end of next quarter we will report our year 1 progress towards the Corporate Strategy Key Performance Indicators, we'll provide an update to Members on the landscape monitoring work, bring forward a refreshed Asset Management Plan and future budget for 2020/21 and share with Members our audience engagement plan.

Outcome: **A sustainable landscape that is conserved and enhanced**

Q3 overview by Director of Conservation and Planning

The National Park Management Plan Advisory Group hosted a Climate Change Summit in October, with all key partners in attendance. The summit focussed on agriculture / land management and transport impacts. Following this, the Programmes and Resources Committee has considered a paper on how we respond to the climate change challenge and a working group of Members is being set up to advise on and focus the work programme on this.

The 'Landscapes Review', chaired by Julian Glover, reported in September with some significant recommendations for the conservation and enhancement of National Park landscapes. The report was considered by Members in November 2019. The Government's response to the report is likely to have some significant implications for how our landscapes are managed. During 2020, the Environment Bill and Agriculture Bill are likely to progress through Parliament and become Acts; both will have significant impacts on how the Authority delivers its purposes and duty.

As in previous quarters, we have seen continued uncertainty around a future system of agricultural support. Officers have been working closely with other English national park authorities, National Parks England and Defra to shape and influence the design of a future environmental land management scheme (ELMS) and have been developing tests and trials for a new system. A draft position statement for the Future of Regulation and Enforcement for Farming & Land Management in the English national parks has been drafted for the NPAs' England Agriculture and Rural Development Group.

The Defra contract for the delivery of the White Peak ELMS Phase 1 Test has been signed. This will focus on testing whether National Character Area assessments can be used as a way of prioritising the public goods to be delivered under ELMS and how farmers and land managers can develop land management plans to deliver those public goods. There is continued evidence that land managers are finding the current support system difficult and this is impacting on how the land is managed, despite advice and support from the Authority.

The Authority's work with partners in landscape scale projects continues with the Moors for the Future, South West Peak Landscape and White Peak Partnerships. The Moors for the Future Partnership has been working with consultants on the future structure and governance of the Partnership on the "Moor Business" project. A brief for a strategic approach to wildfire mitigation has been produced and is being developed with partners and other stakeholders. A fire ignition map of the Peak District moors has been produced, which will inform some of this work. The report on the Moorland Birds Survey was launched in October, but it has been withdrawn pending a further analysis of the results. The report on the Birds of Prey Initiative will be published in Q4.

Work has progressed on setting out a brief and methodology for reviewing the Authority's Landscape Strategy and for landscape monitoring; integrating this with the assessment of special qualities. A revised programme was agreed at the Programmes and Resources Committee in October.

In Development Management, a number of long term absences and vacancies are impacting delivery on determination of applications and pre-application advice. This will continue into the next quarter. Consequently, officers are proposing to suspend the pre-application advice service for a period of 6 months. This will inevitably have an impact on the service provided by the Development Management service and on the income generated through pre-application fees. Officers will keep this under review to assess the operational, financial and reputational impacts.

Outcome: **A National Park loved and supported by diverse audiences**

Q3 overview by Director of Commercial Development and Engagement

This quarter reflects continued positive performance with some notable milestones. Overall 5 KPIs are green, 3 amber and 1 red (income generation).

Our ambition to inspire the next generation continues around the Peak District. We launched and signed up 6 Ambassador Centre partnerships commencing with St Michael's Environmental Education Centre, Hathersage on 1 October. Ambassador Centres work in partnership with PDNPA to inspire young people (10-16 years) to connect and raise awareness about the Peak District National Park's special qualities and how to care for them. We provide the centres with resources and training for their staff to support them to do this.

PDNPA pioneered the first UK national Junior Rangers camp. 46 junior ranger representatives attended from Cairngorms, Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, North York Moors, Pembrokeshire Coast, Peak District National Park and partners. Feedback was very positive with agreement to make it an annual event. In December, over 250 people attended a National Park awareness-raising event at Macclesfield forest (128 children, 123 adults) and over 200 people attended a Longdendale Open Day to celebrate 20 years of working in partnership with United Utilities. 95% of families came specifically to attend the event. 25% of families had never been to Macclesfield Forest before.

The independent audience survey report (NFP Synergy) has been delivered. Combined with the residents survey, STEAM data (tourism) and customer feedback from our visitor touchpoints, this evidence will provide the basis of our plan to drive audience, marketing and communication actions, to increase awareness and connectivity to the National Park and the Authority.

The Foundation (PDNPA's primary fundraising vehicle) has made significant progress and is over a third of the way to the £70k target, with trustees funding wildlife, hedgerow conservation and hydroelectricity projects totalling c£5.5k. Grants ranging from £500 to £2,500 have been distributed to organisations including the PDNPA to deliver community benefits that directly contribute to National Park Management Plan outcomes. The Foundation's new website has been launched and its first raffle with corporate support and prizes from Chatsworth and Losehill House Hotel raised £1,800, increased social media followers, helped build the Foundation brand and engaged volunteers.

Trading for Q3 is comparable to last year which is positive given many retailers struggled over the Christmas period. A new digital campaign on the 12 days to Christmas enabled a more dynamic offer to customers (reaching c100k people).

The Authority had strong coverage (press, peer and industry publications) of the successful planning case against inappropriate damage to a listed building property in Winster. We have also amplified our engagement with Google (where the Park receives over 1m hits per month) by responding to digital reviews and improving content.

Looking forward, Q4 priorities are to produce a joined up audience/communications/marketing plan, champion the Foundation's #70for70 target (a role for Members too) and complete the North Lees Estate consultation.

Outcome: **Thriving communities that are part of this special place**

Q3 overview by Director of Conservation and Planning

The Authority has continued to work with communities in the National Park, with a strong lead from the Policy and Communities Service working with teams in the Commercial Development and Engagement directorate. The Policy and Community Service has produced a draft Engagement Plan to direct and focus our work with communities. The Plan proposes early engagement on policy issues during 2020/21. Methods will include discussion with parishes and surveys using digital media. Issues will be informed by annual monitoring data, early evidence gathering, Parish Statements and related Statement of Communities report, and the national context.

There is continued engagement with the Peak Park Parishes Forum. The annual meeting took place on 12 October 2019, focussing on visitor management. It was well attended, with several parishes attending for the first time. Work continues on producing Parish Statements to share with parishes. We have now produced a Parish Statement for every parish, and we have consulted parishes on the statements. We have had good initial feedback from around two thirds of parishes and this will help to inform and guide our work on the Local Plan Review, development of our definition and understanding of 'thriving and sustainable communities', and the development of community plans by parishes and communities. Community input is also leading to deeper opportunities for community development e.g. through neighbourhood/community plans and projects.

Feedback has allowed officers to commence drafting our first report on the State of Communities, with potential indicators emerging to assist the development of definitions and policy in later stages of plan making.

A Member Local Plan steering group has been established to work with and assist officers through the process of reviewing the Local Plan. During 2020/21 this will include advising on the issues to be developed for early engagement with communities, partners and the general public. The steering group met in early November.

We continue to work with some parishes on Neighbourhood Plans, with Bakewell now at a relatively advanced stage.

There continues to be a good response to community grants, with our funding helping to 'pump prime' some important local projects. We are in the final year of the committed grant, but funding has been allocated to continue this grant.

We have also continued to work with district councils and housing providers to determine levels of need for affordable housing in communities and to identify potential sites to meet this need. Key meetings have been held in Q3 with Peak District Rural Housing Association and High Peak Borough Council.

Outcome: **An agile and efficient organisation**

Q3 overview by Director of Corporate Strategy and Development

During Q3, the Programmes and Resources Committee approved the scope and approach to Member and Officer engagement in relation to four programmes. The four programmes are: climate change; volunteering; landscape programmes monitoring/delivery; and recreation hubs and visitor engagement. For climate change, Members requested that a “Climate Change Member Led Task Group” be created. The Programmes and Resources Committee subsequently agreed the draft terms of reference for the Group and Members were appointed. The Group will develop the Authority’s thinking and response to climate change and act as an advisory body to the Programmes and Resources Committee.

Our Occupational Safety and Health Policy is reviewed annually to ensure it is up-to-date and reflects current best practice and legislation. The Programmes and Resources Committee considered the updated policy in December and agreed that it would become policy from 1 January 2020. We provide Occupational Safety and Health services to several other National Park Authorities who have chosen to adopt the style and content of our Occupational Safety and Health Policy (2020) in order to streamline their own occupational safety and health documentation and achieve greater consistency across the NPA family.

The work undertaken by the Authority’s Internal and External Auditors is a key part of our governance and internal control arrangements. As well as helping to monitor and improve our performance, it also provides a level of assurance that the Authority is financially resilient and provides value for money. At a meeting of the Authority, held on 1 November 2019, Members considered the External Auditors Annual Audit Letter relating to the 2018/19 financial year. The Authority achieved an unqualified opinion on the financial statements and satisfied the External Auditor that proper arrangements are in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. At the same meeting, Members also considered the first three reports provided by the Authority’s Internal Auditors for the 2019/20 financial year. The Internal auditors give an opinion based on five grades of assurance (High / Substantial / Reasonable / Limited / No). Members noted that the three areas audited, Contract Management, Planning and Business Continuity, have been given a High, Substantial and High level of assurance respectively.

On 18 October 2019, a Members workshop took place that focused on the Authority’s financial resources. The objective of the workshop was to inform and engage Members in the development of the 2020/21 revenue budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The MTFP aims to predict future changes in income and expenditure over the period of the current Corporate Strategy (i.e. 2020/21 to 2023/24). To support the construction of the MTFP, a set of assumptions and scenarios are created and these were discussed with Members during the workshop.

A second Member workshop, focusing on human resource issues, was held on 15 November 2019. The workshop provided Members with an update and an opportunity to ask questions relating to key human resource issues affecting the Authority. These included the current workforce profile, our future workforce plans, using the Investors in People framework, becoming an employer of choice together with reward and pay related issues.

During the next quarter, Members will be asked to consider and approve two strategic reports. The first relates to the Authority’s 2020/21 Revenue Budget and references many of the finance and human resource issues discussed during the Member workshops. The second report will seek approval to adopt a Corporate Asset Management Plan, which relates to the Authority’s considerable, complex and varied property portfolio.