

Quarter 4 Performance Report for Year 1 of the Corporate Strategy (2019-20)

Quarterly overview by Chief Executive

RAG status of KPIs: Red = 12, Green = 19, not reported this quarter = 1
RAG status of strategic interventions: Red = 12, Green = 44, not reported this quarter = 1

This report sets out our Q4 and end of Year 1 progress towards the Corporate Strategy Key Performance Indicators. Since our Q3 report, we have taken the opportunity to use the Members Forum to update members on our landscape-scale work, including our outline plans for woodland planting, and we have presented to Members a refreshed Asset Management Plan and future budget for 2020/21. Our intention was also to share with Members our audience engagement plan, but this has been delayed and, subject to the impact of Covid-19, we hope to bring it to members in Q2 of 2020/21.

This report highlights that we have made good progress across our landscape enhancement, audience and community engagement work and in being an agile and efficient organisation. However, we have not met all of our KPIs this year. It has taken longer than we had anticipated this year to develop our plans for landscape monitoring and audience engagement – both are new and, in some cases, pioneering pieces of work where we have had to start from scratch with our data and information. In other cases, our KPIs are reliant on working with others across the National Park or in influencing and informing national policy. I remain confident that while these KPIs are red in this first year, the groundwork we are putting in place with our strategic interventions will put us in a good place to make a long term impact that is sustainable in achieving our outcomes.

We received confirmation this quarter of the funding allocated to us from Government, in the form of our National Park Grant, for the 2020/21 financial year. Our settlement for 2020/21 is £6,698,847. This is the same level of funding we received in 2019/20 and so does not take into account inflationary pressures on our budget. This is not what we had hoped for; however, we have prepared for it. We have identified £152k of baseline budget reductions from the list of proposed savings presented to Members at the February Authority to achieve a balanced budget for 2020/21.

The then Chairs of the English National Park Authorities have written to the new Secretary of State to highlight the exciting opportunity they have to invest in a new deal for national parks for the benefit of the whole nation. The Chief Executives are working to develop delivery plans in the four areas of collective working: 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.

The last weeks of 2019/2020 were significantly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, necessitating a significant change in how we operate and a closing for now of all our face-to-face audience engagement and volunteering services. This impact has continued into Year 2 of the corporate strategy and will impact outcome delivery and income in 2020/21. At an appropriate time it will be important to review with Members this impact and future assumptions in our Corporate Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan.

Overview of Covid-19 response and implications by Chief Executive and Directors

Overview by Chief Executive

On 23rd March 2020, the Prime Minister made it clear that we are facing a national emergency as we tackle the coronavirus outbreak. He clearly and starkly spelled out what all of us need to do: Stay Home, Protect the NHS and Save Lives.

We have responded and, while most of our services remain in operation, we have shifted the whole organisation's way of operating to remote working. This means that our National Park Authority offices are closed and we have closed our visitor facilities, including visitor centres, cycle hire centres and car parks. Our staff are working at home, unless undertaking essential safety tasks, which they are doing in line with strict government guidance. All volunteering activity ceased.

We also took the unprecedented move to ask those who do not live in, or work on essential services in, the Peak District to stay away. This is because it is now absolutely critical for our Peak District communities, businesses, farmers and key workers that we all take these measures extremely seriously; ensuring that we do not put undue and unnecessary pressure on often limited local services and emergency personnel. Members can keep up to date with our response to the changing situation via our website: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Update: Peak District National Park](#).

As well as taking action ourselves, we are working closely with our partners and are connected into the Derbyshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF). Our rangers are regularly patrolling the Peak District National Park under police instruction to engage with and advise people who are clearly not complying with government guidelines. In the majority of cases, people are responding in a positive way. We are finding this cross-partner working on patrols in the Peak District National Park (all led by the police) effective, with a significant drop in visitor numbers being seen. For example, visitor activity trackers at locations such as the popular Monsal Trail near Bakewell have been recording around a 90% drop in numbers, with the remaining volume expected to be some of the National Park's 38,000 residents taking recommended daily exercise. Through National Parks England, we are supporting Defra's response to the emergency and are advising on messaging for access to national parks and the countryside, as well as keeping them briefed on the actions we are taking locally.

The next critical step comes when the Government announces its plans to ease the current restrictions and we will support whatever measures are necessary as an organisation and with partners across the National Park.

We are looking to the future and recovery so we can be ready, when the restrictions lift, for our National Park to remain both a safe home and a welcoming place for others when once again we can enjoy it together. National parks can help guide the UK on a path to recovery. In 2019, across the globe a rising compassion and need for action emerged in climate change discussions, in supporting nature's recovery and our eyes opened to see a growing mental wellbeing crisis. National parks cover 10% of the country and so are places to start this recovery. So while we are currently engaging in a shielding process, encouraging visitors to avoid unnecessary travel and promoting government guidelines to Stay Home, Protect the NHS and Save Lives, we will be ready to welcome the nation again in a new compassionate, courageous campaign to protect our environment and respect the communities who care for it so we can all enjoy being connected to nature, beauty and history.

Overview by Director of Corporate Strategy and Development

When the Authority's administrative offices and operational sites were closed in March 2020, the Business Continuity Plan was initiated and arrangements made for the majority of staff to work remotely. I am pleased to report that all services within the Directorate have adapted well to the changes needed to meet Government requirements and, as far as possible, we have maintained our services and continued to support our colleagues throughout the Authority.

Supporting staff who are using ICT systems to work remotely from home, in larger numbers and for a longer duration than had previously been envisaged, has placed a lot of pressure on our Information Management Team. The team responded superbly to the challenge and have received a lot of thanks. Our Customer and Business Support Team have ensured enquiries from the public have been efficiently dealt with and have continued to provide essential support to our statutory planning function.

Throughout the pandemic, the HR team have been busy issuing guidance to staff and line managers. In addition, the team have been providing regular wellbeing information updates for all staff which have included links to additional online resources. The team have also led the work involved in preparing the Authority to use the Government's Job Retention Scheme and furloughing employees who are funded by commercial income.

Initially, the Finance Team's priority was to ensure that suppliers continued to be paid and, in the first two weeks of remote working, the team processed and paid invoices for goods and services amounting to nearly £1m. Due to the time of year, the team are also required to focus their attention on the 2019/20 financial year-end and start of year (2020/21) procedures. The team will be working hard to meet Government and External Audit deadlines.

The Democratic and Legal Support Team initiated the emergency delegation scheme to ensure the Authority could continue to make decisions and function effectively. The team have reviewed the new Coronavirus Act 2020 and associated regulations which permit the use of virtual meetings. The Legal Team have continued to support our statutory functions and dealt with the demand for Covid-19-related legal work, including advice on contracts, leases, licences etc. In addition, the Legal Team have prepared various guidance notes including a new procurement guide as a result of Covid-19.

The Strategy and Performance Team have continued to provide key performance information to staff and line managers and have supported our internal and external partnerships. The Property Team have ensured that essential access to our offices has been properly controlled to maintain staff health and safety requirements during the lockdown period and have considered and planned for the re-opening of our offices and operational sites.

Although it is too early to determine what the long-term impact of the pandemic will be on the delivery of the planned outcomes in the 2019/24 Corporate Strategy and upon the Authority in general, at the present time the key message is that we are working hard, albeit in a different way than before.

Overview by Director of Conservation and Planning

The work of the Conservation and Planning Directorate has largely continued during the period of lockdown, albeit with some significant changes, which will inevitably have an impact on performance and outcomes. All staff are working from home, with the Director going into Aldern House each Wednesday to help a small team of CBST staff to process and allocate planning applications.

Development Management: We received a letter from the Chief Planner at MHCLG on 23 March, asking planning authorities to maintain the planning system during lockdown and to be innovative in how they do this. We have managed to keep our planning system operating, with officers working from home, but not carrying out site visits. Some urgent enforcement visits have been made. New applications are being received and registered and decisions are being issued. The number of applications is still at pre-emergency levels, but it is anticipated that this will drop as instructions to agents/architects fall. We are agreeing extensions of time where necessary. As noted above, emergency delegation powers are being used and these replaced the April Planning Committee, with the Director making decisions in consultation with the Chair of Planning. The same process will be followed in May. Parish councils are being consulted by email where possible, with a small number still requiring hard copies. Appeals are still being dealt with.

Policy and Communities: All staff are working from home and their work is largely able to continue without significant disruption. There are some difficulties in lodging documents for public consultation as libraries and other public places are closed. The Hope Valley Explorer, which was initiated and managed by this service, has been cancelled for the 2020 season. The team are monitoring visitor numbers on the Monsal trail through electronic counters at Hassop station and the data shows that there was a significant drop in people using the trail at this point once lockdown was in place, after very high numbers on the preceding weekend. The numbers over the Easter weekend were approximately 10% of the normal Easter levels, probably reflecting use by locals rather than visitors. Numbers continue to be around this level, but with slight increases in recent weeks. The team are also monitoring road usage data from various counters around the National Park, which show a similar picture.

Landscape and Conservation: Again, this service is working remotely and is largely able to continue business as usual, although face to face contact with farmers and land managers is not possible. The work of the teams may be hampered in coming weeks if it is not possible to carry out time-critical site survey work. The teams continue to work with partners remotely, with meetings and workshops taking place online (for example, a South West Peak Landscape Partnership legacy workshop and involvement with National Parks England in the development of ELMS with Defra). The teams are considering how to assess the impact of the lockdown on the environment and wildlife.

Moors for the Future Partnership: The team was able to deliver most of their site work by the first week in April, when it is normally completed because of the imminent bird breeding season, delivering several weeks work in just a few days. Some work has been postponed, but the majority was delivered, with very little loss. Staff are now largely working from home. Work continues with partners in developing future projects, such as the Great North Bog, and on the future governance of the Partnership.

Overview by Director of Commercial Development and Engagement

The onset of Covid-19 business continuity was both swift and widespread, closing down all commercial, engagement and volunteering services within days. Employees, casual staff and volunteers have responded magnificently, adapting to very different working conditions with the majority of the directorate being able to work from home. Nevertheless, we do anticipate significant adverse impacts on revenue and delivery of Corporate Strategy and National Park Management Plan outcomes in Q1 and Q2 of next financial year as a minimum.

At the time of writing, our four visitor centres, North Lees Campsite, 46 car parks, 18 toilet facilities, four cycle hire centres and concessions are all closed with the furloughing of 43 employees and 40 casual staff. The Foundation ceased active fundraising and many of the projects they fund have been paused. All corporate social responsibility, learning and discovery and education programmes are closed. Volunteering activities have also been suspended across the organisation and all ranger hubs are closed. Lockdown compounded year end processing of invoices with increased workload on heads of service and team managers which enabled local businesses to be paid without delay. A fantastic cross-organisation effort.

Our trails, however, remained open along with public rights of way, access land, miles without stiles and green lanes for local residents to enjoy their daily exercise. Throughout the lockdown, rangers working under Derbyshire police instruction effectively patrolled hotspots monitoring people movements and informing and advising those who were not complying with social distancing. This became more difficult following the publication of the Crown Prosecution Service guidance in mid-April which compromised enforcement action the police could and were willing to take. In addition, some essential maintenance works continued with appropriate risk assessments and approval by SLT. In late April, planned maintenance work began on the Monsal Trail tunnels and works also restarted on Millers Dale Good Shed renovation in compliance with Government guidance and SLT approval.

Joined up messaging and communications is and has been vital to help protect staff, inspire confidence in our communities and also influence Defra and Government policy. The Marcomms team, all working remotely and supported by content from across the organisation, have been promoting the Stay At Home, Save Our NHS, Save Lives message across our digital media platforms. A more nuanced recovery message based on #peakdistrictproud (respect, protect, enjoy) is being planned when the time is right. The Marcomms team have also been working on other projects remotely with a focus on income generation, for example launching our improved online retail offer. The Engagement team have been active both locally and nationally, designing and transferring content onto digital platforms to help parents with teaching responsibilities.

Working alongside our strategic partners is critical to retain community, business and visitor confidence. All the directorate Heads of Service alongside those in Conservation and Planning are actively leading and contributing weekly to Derbyshire County Council local resilience forum cells, managing issues and increasingly planning for the reopening of our public facing services. I will be representing PDNPA views on the Strategic Recovery Group when it is activated.

To end on a positive, we believe absence makes the heart grow fonder and we look forward to welcoming everyone back in a way that encourages all to be #peakdistrictproud, and feel confident and safe from the measures we will have implemented through the recovery process. **The current situation will pass, but the Peak District will be there when all this is over and will need everyone's support more than ever.**

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

Q4 overview by Director of Conservation and Planning

During 2020, the Environment Bill and Agriculture Bill are expected to progress through Parliament and become Acts; both will have significant impacts on how the Authority delivers its purposes and duty. The Environment Bill introduces a process for 'Biodiversity Net Gain' into the planning system. The Environmental Land Management Policy consultation was launched in February 2020 with an initial response deadline of 5 May 2020. Due to Covid-19, the consultation has been paused and the revised timescale for responses is not yet known. We have seen continued uncertainty around a future system of agricultural support. Officers continue to work closely with other English national park authorities, National Parks England (NPE) and Defra to shape and influence the design of a future environmental land management scheme (ELMS); our Head of Landscape and Conservation is leading on this for NPE.

Defra is developing tests and trials for a new system and the contract for the delivery of the White Peak ELMS Phase 1 Test has begun. This focuses on testing whether National Character Area assessments can be used to prioritise public goods to be delivered under ELMS and how farmers and land managers can develop land management plans to deliver those public goods. Whilst the proposals set out in the ELMS policy consultation document are broadly in line with the proposals put forward by NPE, the English NPAs and the PDNPA, the details are not yet clear and crucially there is no certainty as to the level of funding for ELMS. The attractiveness of the future scheme in terms of its design, governance and payment rates will be critical to the level of take up.

The Authority's partner work on landscape scale projects continues with the Moors for the Future, South West Peak Landscape and White Peak Partnerships. Covid-19 meant that the delivery of some projects was brought forward at the end of the quarter, but most projects have been delivered as they were due to be completed by the start of the bird nesting season. Other projects will either be postponed or redesigned in consultation with partners and funders. Officers are discussing how we can assess the impact of the Covid-19 lockdown on biodiversity and wildlife – birds in particular. The Birds of Prey Initiative's report was published in Q4. This showed some good trends (e.g. goshawk), but numbers are still below the 1990 target figure. Discussions are taking place with the consultants who produced the Moorland Birds Survey report, which launched in October, but was withdrawn pending a further analysis of the results.

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. Cranfield University are carrying out a semi-automated approach to the sample repeat of the Countryside Commission's Monitoring Change in National Parks. A sample repeat of the Landscape Strategy Landscape Description Unit photos has been completed. Major new Countryside Stewardship agreements have been completed for North Lees/Stannage Estate and the Swallowmoss Moors on the Warslow Moors Estate. Jointly, these will attract revenue grant funding into the properties of over £65k per annum. A major capital grant of £300k has been secured for re-wetting the Swallowmoss Moors in the autumn of 2021 and 2022.

In Development Management, a number of long term absences and vacancies led to the suspension of the pre-application advice service for a period of 6 months from mid-February. Whilst this will inevitably have an impact on the service provided by the Development Management service and on the

income generated through pre-application fees, the Covid-19 emergency is likely to have a greater, nationwide impact. Steps have been taken to keep the planning system working in the National Park during the emergency, as requested by MHCLG.

Outcome: A National Park loved and supported by diverse audiences

Q4 overview by Director of Commercial Development and Engagement

I am proud to report the directorate has made solid progress in year 1 towards our corporate strategic outcomes. Year 1 has seen us establish clear baseline evidence on audiences; showing we are closer to some of our target demographics than previously thought. We are achieving **greater audience reach among under-represented groups** under this corporate strategy: our learning and discovery offer expanded through establishing 7 ambassador centres, upskilling local groups to deliver courses and reaching into new geographic areas (e.g. MOSAIC in the SW Peak accessing Stoke).

People's connection with the Peak District National Park and its special qualities continues to strengthen. In 2019/20 we saw a continued upward trend in 'reach' (individuals exposed to our messages). In particular, our social media channels saw an average annual growth in followers of 23%, with monthly connections up to 1.5m people. Campaign-specific activity (e.g. Hope Valley Explorer, 2019 season) routinely reached in excess of 1m people across a mixed portfolio of media communications of online, print and broadcast.

We successfully launched #peakdistrictproud as a new digital campaign with our major landowner partners to revitalise the Countryside Code, promoting the message to respect, protect and enjoy your National Park. The launch reached over half a million people. Our voice has amplified across many strategic priorities including climate change with the conference hosted by the National Park Management Plan Advisory group, blogging from our chair and features within Parklife.

Enhancing and maintaining our historic buildings and landscapes are an important reason why people connect passionately with the Peak District National Park. New investments opened: Millers Dale café and Hulme End Cycle Hire, extending visitor touchpoints away from traditional hotspots. 10km of improvements to access and rights of way infrastructure (gates, signage and surfacing) were delivered through influencing local and highways authorities and landowners. £700k in grants were successfully secured (Millers Dale good shed development and Swallowmoss Moor) in addition to £260,000 investment to conserve and enhance traditional buildings notably on the Warslow estate, which support 80 tenants.

Active support provides valued resource to keep the National Park a special place for everyone. We are indebted to individuals, businesses, partners and volunteers who freely give their expertise, commitment and financial support. Gross revenue income of £120k was realised. Our charitable foundation, in its first year of operation, generated income of £80k and distributed money to a number of community projects. Income from visitor centres, cycle hire, food and beverage concessions, fees and charges and property rents showed solid performance. North Lees Campsite continues to perform well and our Countryside Maintenance and Projects Team exceeded its income target. Car park income increased but was lower than forecast due to sustained poor weather over the summer season. Income from hosting corporate social responsibility days continues to grow. Our success across the organisation securing grants remains strong with £6,439,909 grant income accounted for in 19/20 compared with £5,917,181 in 2018/19. Volunteers contributed **49,829 hours** in total with a value of £797,801, exceeding the annual target by 10%. This represents all volunteering across the organisation.

Year 2 strategic outcomes will focus on rebounding from Covid-19 as quickly as government guidance allows and relaunching people's connection with nature.

Outcome: Thriving communities that are part of this special place

Q4 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.

We have now produced a Parish Statement for every parish in the National Park, and we have consulted parishes on the statements. Over half have contributed positively to this process adding greater richness, accuracy and further detail about the place, leading in several cases to the creation of new community visions directly shaping the future of these special places. 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.

Our work with communities is progressing well; officers have worked with 41 communities to shape their place across the year, greatly exceeding expectations under this KPI. However, whilst officers have instigated a wide range and quality of community focussed interventions during the past year, this does not meet the figures assumed at the start of the year. In reviewing the range and effectiveness of the interventions, officers considered that a refocus on events that strongly promote environmental aims is a better use of our resources and leads to stronger outcomes for the National Park than purely striving for high numbers.

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. Across 2019/20 projects have included Bollington Heritage Trails, Bakewell in Bloom & Flower Trail, Grindleford Allotment, Birchover Party, Warslow village hall boiler, Stoney Middleton Village Plan – materials and community event, Taddington Church Council, bird nesting projects, Bamford community society (lunch club) and support to Hope Valley Climate Action in undertaking air quality monitoring.

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.

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

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. Several sites are currently under construction in Bakewell, Bradwell, Taddington and Winster to deliver 50 affordable local needs housing units.

An agile and efficient organisation

Q4 overview by Director of Corporate Strategy and Development

Although the final quarter of 2019/20 was latterly dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic (the Directorate response to which is described at the start of this report), a great deal was achieved during the year. The first quarter of each new financial year is always busy and 2019/20 was no exception. To ensure the Authority continues to operate effectively, a variety of essential governance, finance and performance related activities are undertaken. Our Financial Accounts for 2018/19, Annual Governance Statement and Performance and Business Plan were all completed by the statutory deadlines.

To support our aim to continuously improve, we were assessed against the latest Investors in People (IIP) standard and the IIP's Health and Wellbeing good practice award. In May 2019, the Authority successfully achieved both awards. During the summer, action plans for both awards were developed to seek further improvement. More recently, we have developed our organisational values of 'Care', 'Enjoy' and 'Pioneer' and identified a set of supporting behaviours that will be important in guiding us into the future. We hope they will serve us well during 2020/21 and beyond.

Following a review, a new structure for the Corporate Property Team was developed to ensure the right skills and experience to maintain the Authority's property portfolio. A new Corporate Property Asset Management Plan (2020-2024) was approved by Members on 14th February 2020. The Programmes and Resources Committee approved the scope for the Authority's climate change work and approved the creation of a Climate Change Members' Task Group. The Group will develop the Authority's thinking and response to climate change and act as an advisory body to the Committee.

We are currently leading a development project which aims to create shared information technology services. The project has progressed well and it is hoped it will provide a platform to share more services with other national park authorities in the future. The benefits to the Authority, from its investment in technology and new ways of remote working, were clearly evident when the Business Continuity Plan was put into effect in March 2020.

The Authority's Annual General Meeting was held on 5th July 2019 and eleven new Members were welcomed to the Authority. The initial induction for all new Members was completed during Q2. The work of the Member-led Governance Working Group has continued throughout the year and update reports have been provided to the Authority. It is planned that the work of the Group will be concluded during 2020/21.

The work undertaken by the Authority's Internal and External Auditors is a key part of our governance arrangements. The Authority achieved an unqualified opinion from our External Auditor, who confirmed that proper arrangements are in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of our resources. Members also considered seven Internal Audit reports all of which provided a high or substantial level of assurance.

Members approved the Authority's Revenue Budget for 2020/21 in February 2020 and the Budget report included a forward look in terms of the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). When the report was approved, no one could have foreseen the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and at an appropriate time it will be necessary to review the impact on the planned strategic outcomes for 2019/24 and the assumptions in the Authority's MTFP.