

8. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT (SLF)

1. Purpose of the report

To up-date members of key items since the previous Authority meeting

2. Recommendation

1. For members to note the report

3. Key Items

COVID-19 response – The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) continue to meet twice weekly to oversee operations and the organisation continues to work well to deliver our services. Chairs and vice chairs are meeting with SLT on a regular basis to get the latest picture and oversee our work. Underpinning all our decisions is an alignment with government guidance, so as this changes we will review our approach. To support the government's further easing of restrictions our messaging with partners is focussing on the Peak District being both a safe home for residents and offering a safe welcome for visitors so we can all be #PeakDistrictProud.

We have seen a significant up-turn in numbers of people accessing the National Park for their exercise. We are working with our partners to co-ordinate the re-opening of the facilities that support the enjoyment of the countryside in the National Park and on messaging and information about how to respectfully enjoy their access. An area of focus for us recently is on fire risk and looking at how to support our engagement activity with the new audiences we are seeing coming into the national park. We have written to all retailers and forecourts across the national park asking them to voluntarily remove disposable BBQs from sale; over a dozen have done this so far and we worked with the main landowners and land owner representative to be able to say this... [National Park Authority confirms barbecues are not permitted anywhere in the open countryside of the Peak District National Park: Peak District National Park](#) .

We have been planning a safe return of our visitor facing services. Our car parks were opened with the easing of the lock down restrictions in mid-May, we have opened a handful of toilets at some of our key hotspots. Rangers are focussing on routine safety inspections on our properties, maintaining rights of way infrastructure and car parks, installing and replacing signage including Covid-19 advice, patrolling our 45 car parks and key 'honeypot' visitor sites to engage with visitors, providing updates to our [car park alerts system](#), supporting observations for wild fire, and assisting partners with activities such as litter collection. Our visitor, cycle hire centres and North Lees campsite will open when government guidance allows and it is safe to do so, with the current plan for many such sites to be open by early to mid-July 2020. We've also put in place a phased and safe return of volunteering activities, linking volunteering to the above areas of focus.

We continue to keep staff informed and to check with them the support they may need. The majority of staff continue to be able to work from home. We have identified a handful of staff who do need to access the office and, from 22 June 2020, Aldern House will be open for this small number of staff. We have implemented measures that follow government guidance so Aldern House can be a COVID-19 safe workspace. Anyone entering the building will need to undergo a short induction to cover the new working practices.

You can keep up to date with our response to the changing situation via our website: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Update: Peak District National Park](#)

Supporting a green recovery - We are working with our partners through the Derbyshire Local Resilience Forum to support the strategic recovery. We appreciate there is a desperate need to kick-start the economy both locally and nationally and are making the case for this recovery to be underpinned by green building blocks as this will be more sustainable and equitable. We are seeking objectives and indicators to be set to reflect this green recovery aim – so recovery replenishes natural capital (i.e. our natural assets) and promotes the well-being of our citizens, including a connection to nature and the outdoors. From the Peak District's perspective, it's now more important than ever for Derbyshire to develop a low carbon, low impact active travel offer for National Park visitors and communities alike. This is the opportunity to make a lasting difference, from new cycling and walking infrastructure to innovative travel products, better integration and marketing. We are also working with our fellow National Parks and on 15 June 2020 National Parks England submitted to Defra a paper on “National Parks Supporting a Green, Rural and Inclusive Recovery from Covid-19”. This is attached at appendix 1.

Long service awards – I have had the opportunity to give seven long service awards since the Authority meeting in May 2020.

Medium Term Financial Plan - We are living in rapidly changing times, which is affecting the income of many businesses and those in the voluntary sector. National Parks and the Peak District National Park Authority is not immune to this, even with the important job we have to do. At the May Authority meeting, we highlighted to members the significant concerns we had over the impact of the coronavirus emergency on our income this financial year. Members agreed to proposals to create a £480k emergency COVID-19 reserve to support this immediate impact, which is a start to managing our immediate in-year pressures. This is just a start. We need to continue to plan and put in place measures to manage the pressures on our budget over the rest of this year and into future years. The majority of our revenue comes from the National Park Grant provided by Defra. This currently stands at £6.7 million per year. Based on information currently available, we anticipate that our annual revenue budget will be between £600k to £900k lower over the next three years. Put simply, we know we will not have enough revenue money to cover our staff and fixed operating costs from 1 April 2021. To meet this challenge we will be planning early to explore all options to keep our costs in balance with our income and avoid job losses. We will work with and seek members early advice and input into this planning. In undertaking this planning, we are clear that our two statutory purposes have equal weight and we must be mindful of our duty. Our common organisational brief remains the Corporate Strategy 2019-24. We will be challenging operating costs, reviewing service levels, reserves and how we can accelerate sustainable income sources.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1: National Parks Supporting a Green, Rural and Inclusive Recovery from Covid-19

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Sarah Fowler, Chief Executive, 25 June 2020