

6. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT (SLF)**

1. **Purpose of the report**

To up-date Members of key items since the previous Authority meeting on 12th November 2021.

2. **Recommendation**

1. **For Members to note the report**

3. **Key Items**

Government response to the Landscapes Review published: On 15 January the Government published its response to the Landscapes Review report 2021. There will be a 12 week consultation on a number of areas of the Government response and we have been assured that National Park Authorities will be engaged throughout the process. The full response can be seen at Appendix 1 a Question & Answer sheet (Appendix 2) and the press release associated with it at Appendix 3. National Parks England response to the publication can be seen at Appendix 4

In summary, there is nothing hugely contentious in the government announcement and it is supportive of the role protected landscapes play for the nation on climate change, nature recovery and the wellbeing of society. There is very limited new money coming our way however to deliver, and so while we welcome the recognition of our role as a beacon for the nation, we are mindful of the importance of collaboration with others if we are to achieve this and what we could achieve if we had the right resources.

Performance management – Q3 exceptions: At the Authority meeting in November 2020 it was confirmed that future performance monitoring will be presented to Members twice a year - at 6 months into the financial year (end of quarter 2) and the end of the financial year (end of quarter 4). Members were reassured this will not affect Member scrutiny of Authority performance because the KPIs, strategic interventions and corporate risk register will continue to be monitored quarterly by the Management Team and any significant changes will be reported to Members within this Chief Executive's update report to the Authority at Quarters 1 and 3. I have reviewed, with the Management Team, the quarter 3 progress and below are the key strategic areas of concern for reporting to Members:

There are four new strategic concerns raised:

- Possible impact of Covid is still a risk. All service areas have reviewed their business critical activities against a worst case scenario of 25% of their work force off sick due to Covid. Management Team have identified mitigation measures that would be put in should this scenario potentially impact business critical activities. The most likely impact should this scenario occur is an impact on non-business critical activities which would need to be paused or slowed to ensure we maintain our business critical activities.
- Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme revised 2021/22 project funding of £475,000 not being spent by 31 March 2022 and resulting reputational risk for the Authority. The mitigation is regular reporting of spend to the FiPL panel, work by the farm advisers to highlight the opportunity to farmers and land managers and regular liaison with Defra.
- South West Peak Landscape Partnership Programme (SWPLP) not completing all deliverables to ensure that all the National Lottery Heritage Funding is secured and that the legacy including a successor programme may not be secured
- Ongoing strain on our Planning Service capacity owing to staff sickness, departures and high volumes of planning applications and pre-application enquiries

- Increasing risks on delivery of winter works by the Moors for the Future team

Four strategic interventions are raised as exceptions:

- Developing a methodology for strategic sustainable landscape monitoring (part of KPI 2a), which has been affected by the introduction of Farming in Protected Landscapes and the need to develop one nature recovery plan for the Peak District.
- Developing and adopting the remaining Conservation Area appraisals (part of KPI 10), which has been affected by Covid-19 and increased numbers of planning applications.
- Implement Asset Management Plan (part of KPI 23), which has been affected by vacancies in the service, delays with restructure and sickness absence.
- Further implementation of an online procurement portal (part of KPI 26), which has been impacted by the need to work from home preventing face-to-face training. However procurement continues in line with our Standing Orders.

Three corporate risks are raised as exceptions:

- Failure to develop nature recovery networks (Amber)
- Area of NP land safeguarded in environmental land management schemes (Red)
- Farming in Protected Landscapes Fund (Red)

Return to the workplace – For staff who are office based, October 2021 marked a return to the office and workplace in a more structured way since March 2020 following blended working principles agreed by the Management Team, in consultation with Staff Committee and Unison. In December, as part of our approach to continuing to respond to any further government guidance, we paused these principles with the advice from the Government for employees to work from home where they can. This meant we paused the planning of our approach to Aldern House reopening to the public, and currently this is operating on a by appointment only basis, ensuring we take a cautious approach to this over the winter months. However the Blended Working Group are re-visiting our approach given the recent lifting, by the Government, of the Work from Home instruction.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Government Response to the Landscapes Review

Appendix 2 – Question & Answer Sheet

Appendix 3 – Defra Press Release

Appendix 4 – National Parks England Response to the Landscape Review

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Sarah Fowler, Chief Executive, 27 January 2022