

8. STANAGE-NORTH LEES PROGRESS REPORT (PM 6193 /JRN)

Purpose of the report

1. This report, as recommended by the September 2014 ARP committee, updates Members on the management of Stanage-North Lees and reports on the progress of the business plan to achieve full cost recovery.

Recommendations

2.
 1. **Members endorse the approach adopted in the draft management plan and the proposals for further consultation and completion of the plan**
 2. **Members acknowledge the progress made toward achieving Full Cost Recovery and with regard to increasing the delivery of our statutory purposes at Stanage-North Lees, including the campsite.**

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

3. Stanage/North Lees is a conservation asset for the National Park that brings pleasure and inspiration to millions.

As detailed in the September 2014 report it contributes to the majority of our corporate outcomes. In addition it is central to all four of the Authority's new directional shifts.

S1 Develop strong commercial and fund raising activities
S1a, b and c. Giving, income generation and fund raising

S2 landscape Scale Delivery
S2a. Nurture partnerships, in this case the Sheffield Moors Partnership

S3 Create inspiring visitor experiences
S3b Enhance visitor experience at our assets

S4 Help people connect with the Park
S4a and b. Nurture volunteers and improve access for less represented audiences.

It is also at the heart of the second cornerstone.

C2 Our Assets
C2a Excellence in our property and C2c Supporting our brand

Background

4. Stanage-North Lees is one of three major properties owned and managed by the Authority. It includes moorland, dramatic gritstone edges, woodland and farmland, all of exceptional scenic, biodiversity and cultural heritage value, in addition to a small campsite, farm complex and North Lees Hall.
5. Following considerable debate over the future of the property in 2012 and 2013 a new Vision for Stanage-North Lees was developed, and a new management team put in place in 2014. The new team has been tasked with both maximising the opportunities for delivering the Authority's directional shifts and moving towards full cost recovery.

6. The vision summary is as follows with a full version available at http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/508352/Vision.pdf

Our Vision

To care for, enjoy and promote understanding of Stanage-North Lees in a sustainable way which respects and enhances wildlife, cultural heritage and landscape for everyone, forever.

Progress

7. Management Plan

In partnership with Stanage Forum steering group, an independent body representing user groups and local people, a new management plan for Stanage-North Lees is being developed. The proposal is to take the plan to an open meeting of the forum on 31 October 2015, followed by a public consultation period with the aim being to have finalised the plan by the end of December 2015. Stella McGuire has represented Authority members on the steering group and has been intimately involved in the development of the management plan.

The draft plan is in two parts:

1. A summary document will be available both on our website and as hard copy, a draft of which is attached as Appendix I.
2. A detailed management plan as a web-based document only.

The management plan will be complemented by a detailed action plan which outlines the specifics of how we intend to meet our aims and objectives with timescales and responsibilities for implementation.

The plan is split into four parts (Landscape, People, Connections and Resources) mirroring the four sections of the Vision, and is designed to deliver our statutory purposes and the National Park mission. The plan also recognises that everyone has a part to play in the management of Stanage-North Lees. It is 'Ours to Care For'. This short phrase expresses the essence of what we are trying to achieve. It represents the great value of this landscape and our collective responsibility for its future.

8. Campsite

ARP Committee in January 2015 agreed to continue to manage the North Lees Campsite in house with up to £60,000 capital investment financed from borrowing, and ask Officers to prepare a detailed Business/Mitigation Plan for consideration by the Committee in September 2015.

Four camping pods were introduced to the campsite in 2015 in time for the school summer holidays. It is proposed to carry out small-scale improvements to the campsite building in Autumn 2015. These improvements have been coupled with the development and implementation of management and action plans including a marketing plan (see Appendix II).

Feedback from campsite users continues to be very positive including feedback from the users of the camping pods. No-one has suggested that the pods detract from the nature and character of the site whilst the camping pods appear to be enabling a wider range of people to experience camping and the National Park, including young

families, people travelling on foot and single females. An occupancy rate of 75% was achieved during the two weeks of July that they were operational and close to 95% in August. The income from the pods (up to the end of August) is £4347 which is 87% of the expected loan re-payments for the pods and the improvements to the campsite building combined. Annually the target occupancy is 40% (100 nights per year). Whilst this appears a cautious approach we will only be able to revise these forecasts after a full year of trading when we have a better understanding of their seasonal use.

Table 1 Camping Pod Income Predictions

Camping Pod Income				
	Nights occupancy	Standard Pod @£25/night (excl VAT)	Family pods @£33/night (excl VAT)	For four pods
2015/16 (part year)	60	£1,500	£2,000	£7,000
	Nights occupancy	Standard Pods @£26/night	Family pods @£35/night	For four pods
2016/17-18/19	£100	£2,583	£3,500	£12,167

Table 2 Campsite Business Plan

Business Plan				
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure				
Costs	48	48.5	42	42.5
Loan Repayments	5	5	5	5
Total	53	53.5	47	47.5
Income				
Camping	(54)	(55)	(56)	(57)
Camping Pods	(7)	(12)	(12)	(12)
Total	(61)	(67)	(68)	(69)
Net (Income) or Expenditure	(8)	(13.5)	(21)	(21.5)

Calculations shown in the business plan are based on:

1. Making a small increase in camping rates in 2016/17 following the facilities upgrade planned for autumn 2015
2. A possible reduction in campsite warden costs in 2017/18
3. A small annual increase in costs compared to 2015/16 (which are based on the 2014/15 costs)

The calculations do not take into account further developments at the campsite which are all dependent on planning permission.

By the end of July the income from camping was just above the profile expected in order to deliver against our target of £54,000 for 2015/16. (This target is £6000 more than the income achieved in 2014/15). This is coupled with a reduction in the use of casual staff which has allowed us to control our staff costs.

The successes so far this year have been achievable because of the integral nature of the management of Stanage-North Lees, the flexibility shown by the staff and the willingness on the part of everyone to make the campsite work both in delivering National Park messages and increasing its financial viability.

9. Landscape

A wide range of works have been implemented over the last 12 months including:

- Continuing works aimed at enhancing the woodlands and at restoring heather moorland below the eastern end of Stanage Edge funded through the Nature Improvement Area and with volunteer involvement.
- The introduction of cattle grazing on Sheepwash bank with the aim of enhancing the moorland/rough grazing habitats.
- Grip blocking on White Path Moss aimed at enhancing the blanket bog vegetation.
- The removal of Stanage Pole for safety reasons. The process for installing a replacement is well underway involving the Clarion Ramblers and Hope Construction Ltd.
- The removal of unnecessary fencing and signage as the first phase in the access proposals in the new Management Plan.

10. Engagement

- Stanage Forum steering group has met at least once a month since November 2014 to develop the new management plan. In addition individual members of the group have been involved in practical action and engagement activities.
- The Stanage Sticker scheme (see Appendix III) seeks to encourage personal contributions to the management of the property. Supported by the British Mountaineering Council, Ride Sheffield, the Dark Peak Fell Runners, Sheffield Bird Study Group and various outdoor shops, climbing walls and bike shops, over 400 individuals have contributed £15 (£12.50 + VAT) and we are collecting an email database of the contributors (who could be described as a 'Supporter' group). In addition to the income generated the scheme has proved to be a very effective way of communicating our principles and messages to a range of different users. Interestingly climbers are the most involved user group.
- In addition to its normal work with schools at Stanage, the Learning & Discovery Team have run weekly children's activities at the campsite during the school holidays which have proved to be successful and well received.

- The Peak Park Conservation Volunteers have been involved in a wide array of conservation tasks and we are seeking to develop links between particular groups and Stanage-North Lees including the Fit for Work Team who are part of the Nottinghamshire probation service.
- A programme of Stanage specific walks led by the property manager, the ranger and the campsite warden has been implemented over the spring/summer both for the general public and for specific groups including the Northern Refugee Council. These are in addition to the Ranger-led walks. The Ranger has also delivered several talks on Ring Ouzels and local history to local interest groups.
- We have had a presence at Hathersage gala and at Cliffhangar and are involved in the Sheffield Adventure Conference.
- Increased accessibility along Long Causeway as a result of the Traffic Regulation Order and the partial surfacing has enabled a wide range of less able visitors to access the moorland areas of Stanage-North Lees.

11. The Farm

The Farm Business tenancy is about to be signed. A small herd of pedigree shorthorn cattle is now established at North Lees, monitoring of the hay meadows has demonstrated their great biodiversity value and work is expected to start very shortly on the modern farm building to make it fit for purpose as a livestock shed. The farm teas are adding a valuable and well-received service to visitors to the property. (This is the tenant's initiative.) In addition the farm and the farm teas were awarded the Environmental Quality Mark in April 2015.

12. External Funding

£3500 has been secured from Natural England's internal innovation fund for work connected to Ring Ouzels at Stanage and Burbage owing to the national recognition of the important role the Ranger has played in the conservation of Ring Ouzels at Stanage.

An application to the SITA Trust for (£20-£30,000) grant aid towards physical access works is under development and due to be submitted before the end of September for implementation in 2016/17.

The Heritage Lottery Fund have invited us to submit a stage 1 application for up to £1 million for works connected to engaging people in the conservation and celebration of Stanage-North Lees and its multitude of heritage features whilst encouraging access by less advantaged and poorly represented groups. Andrew McCloy represented Authority members in a meeting with HLF in August. It is proposed to submit an application in November 2015 or February 2016.

Business Plan

13. The current direct budget for Stanage-North Lees is a surplus of £8,000, with estimated corporate costs of £38,000. The objective as reported to ARP in September 2013 and 2014 is to achieve Full Cost Recovery. Table 3 shows how we plan to move toward this target over the next three years.

Table 3 Stanage-North Lees Business Plan

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Notes
	£000	£000	£000	£000	
Expenditure					
Total pay	89	89	82	82	Reduction in campsite staff time probable (but not confirmed) from 2017/18 once improvements completed
Buildings - minor repairs	4	4	4	4	
Grounds - Maintenance	14	13	13	13	
Electricity	4	5	5	5	
Rents	4	4.5	5	5.5	Car Parks
Rates	5	5	5	5	Campsite and car parks
Cleaning materials	2	2	2	2	Campsite and toilets
Premises insurance	1	2	2	2	
Transport	4	4	5	5	Wardens vehicle and mileage
Supplies and services	6	6.5	6.5	7	Including fire equipment testing, waste collection, telephones
Rural Surveyor support	5	1	1	1	
Tenants share of Higher Level Stewardship	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	
Field Services support	2.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	
Loans	7	7	7	7	Wardens vehicle and campsite improvements
Expenditure Total	164	161	155.5	156.5	
Income					
Government grants	(33)	(33)	(25)	(25)	Income from new

					Countryside Stewardship Scheme expected to be significantly less
Refreshment concessions	(14)	(16)	()	()	
Rents	(24)	(24)	(24)	(24)	
Filming	(2)	(3)	(3)	(3)	
Camping Income	(54)	(55)	(56)	(57)	
Camping Pod Income	(7)	(12)	(12)	(12)	
Car park charges	(33)	(33)	(37)	(38)	
Sticker Scheme	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)	
Income Total	(172)	(181)	(179)	(182)	
Net (Income) or Expenditure	(8)	(20)	(23.5)	(25.5)	
% Full Cost Recovery	85%	91%	93%	94%	

14. The budget for 2015/16 includes £6000 income linked to rent from the Vivat Trust. Given the present uncertainty over the Hall this income target may not be achieved and costs in relation to the day to day maintenance of the hall are likely.
15. Whilst our financial planning to date does not show Full Cost Recovery within the next three years we anticipate developments within this time-frame that will allow us to significantly increase our income. These relate to:
1. North Lees Hall
 2. Cattisside Cottage
 3. Further developments at the campsite (subject to planning permission) including electric hook-ups for small campervans and sustainable energy proposals
 4. Our 'Giving' opportunities
 5. Initiatives connected to the proposed Heritage Lottery bid and other external funding
16. It is important to recognise that the agri-environment/woodland grant schemes, many 'giving' options and external funding are very often linked to delivery on the ground that is above and beyond the normal running costs of the property including the staff costs. This limits our options for covering our core costs using these sources of funding.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

17. **Financial:**

The financial position is described above.

18. **Risk Management:**

There are additional uncertainties, beyond those indicated above, in relation to:

1. The Stanage Sticker Scheme which will require an on-going high profile and considerable time investment
2. The income from the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme. (The existing Higher Level Stewardship Scheme comes to an end in 2017.)
3. The rent connected to the farm which is linked to the Farm Business Plan and the Basic Payment Scheme, the latter being largely out of our control

19. **Sustainability:**

Sustainability lies at the core of our management planning work.

The proposals for a ground source heat pump at the campsite are on hold whilst we explore the full range of renewable energy options in the light of the increased demands for hot water and electricity as a result of the improvements that are being made.

20. **Background papers** (not previously published)

None

Appendices

Appendix I Draft Stanage-North Lees Management Plan Summary
Appendix II North Lees Campsite Management & Action Plans
Appendix III Stanage Sticker flyer

Rebekah Newman, Stanage-North Lees Property Manager, 10 September 2015