

**REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE  
1 APRIL 2024 TO 31 MARCH 2025**

**(A) Core Principle - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of Law**

**Sub Principle: A (1) Behaving with Integrity – We will:**

- 1) Embed in the way we work our organisational values, adopted in 2020, of
  - Care – we care for the Peak District National Park, the people we work with and all those we serve. It's at the heart of everything we do;
  - Enjoy – we take pride in what we do and feel good about our contribution;
  - Pioneer – We were born of pioneers. We will continue to explore opportunities to inspire future generations;
- 2) Ensure that standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of Members and Officers is defined, communicated (internally and externally) and monitored through codes of conduct, protocols and advice;
- 3) Ensure that our decision-making processes are open, transparent and free from bias and conflicts of interest;
- 4) Have in place a framework of policies and processes that support good governance in all that we do; we will review and improve these in response to feedback and evaluation of effectiveness.

**What evidence/assurance is in place?**

- Codes of conduct for Members and Officers with conduct included in Member and Officer induction.
- Supplementary advice on behaviour of Members and Officers in Committee;
- Protocol on Development Control and Planning Policy in place;
- Registers of Members and Officer interests and guidance with annual review by Monitoring Officer;
- Member and Officer gifts and hospitality register and guidance with annual review by Monitoring Officer;
- Member Standards included in the Authority Meeting Terms of Reference;
- Nolan Principles are incorporated into Member Code of Conduct;
- Procedures in place to consider code of conduct complaints against Members which were reported to the Authority Meeting as part of bi-annual report on complaints. Performance reporting procedures changed during 2023/24 with the last bi-annual report on complaints in May 2023 and this became annual reporting in 2024/25;
- The Ombudsman's annual review of the Authority is reported annually to Members;
- Complaints policy in place and individual complaints are monitored and reported to the Authority meeting with lessons learned. Reported bi-annually from 2020/21 to 2023/24 and annually from 2024/25;
- Declaration of Interest is a standing agenda item at meetings and Members are provided with a form to record interests as they prepare for the meeting. Minutes of meetings of the Authority and its Committees show that declarations were sought and recorded;
- Due Diligence Panel established with Annual Report reviewed by Programmes & Resources Committee (P&R);
- Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting) Policy in place

<p>with regular review against CIPFA code with the Chair and the Deputy Chair of the Authority advised of any allegations and the outcome of investigations. Our Contract Procedure Rules and standard terms and conditions for contracts refer to these policies;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information management policies framework (including E-Policy);</li> <li>• Data Protection Charter with tools to ensure compliance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During 2024/25 there were two Member Code of Conduct Complaints received, which were subsequently withdrawn.</li> <li>• A summary of all complaints from members of the public was reported to the Authority in the bi-annual performance report up to May 2023. The report included information of the outcome of the complaint, management action taken and lessons learned from the complaint. This report became a separate annual report in September 2024.</li> <li>• Completed the Monitoring Officer's annual review of Officers' and Members' Register of Interests and the registers of Gifts and Hospitality.</li> <li>• Following the AGM in July 2024 all Authority Members were asked to review and update their entries in the Register of Interests.</li> <li>• The annual report of the Due Diligence Panel was received by Programmes and Resources Committee in December 2024.</li> <li>• To support the Authority's aim to continuously improve and benchmark its performance against other organisations the Authority chose to be assessed against the latest Investors in People (IIP) standard and, following an extensive assessment exercise, the Authority received notification in May 2019 that it had successfully achieved the IIP standard and the Health and Wellbeing Award at 'Developed' level.</li> <li>• In October 2020, the IIP Delivery Group were key in the identification of the Authority's core values of CARE, ENJOY, and PIONEER.</li> <li>• Adopted the new values and behaviours into person specifications to be used in our recruitment and selection process replacing the competency framework.</li> <li>• At the next IIP assessment in May 2022, the Authority achieved the IIP standard and Health &amp; Wellbeing Award at 'Established' or Silver level.</li> <li>• The Authority has been assessed again in April 2025, and awaits the outcome.</li> <li>• The Joint Performance Appraisal Review process was replaced with Performance Management Appraisal (PMA) process in line with 'keep it simple' behaviour of our core values, with streamlined guidance and forms. The PMA process includes Pioneer conversations (objective setting), Enjoy conversations (look back at what has been achieved), and Care conversations (to support employees be the best person they can be in the job they are in).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sub Principle: A (2) Demonstrating a strong commitment to ethical values – We Will:</b></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5) Embed our standards of behaviour and values underpinning the way we work in job descriptions, through recruitment and selection, and the performance management (appraisal) process.</li> <li>6) Ensure our HR, governance and procurement policies and procedures promote and support our values and standards and use every opportunity to promote our standards of behaviour and the values underpinning the way we work through for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational development programme;</li> <li>• Leadership group development;</li> <li>• Corporate Learning and development programme;</li> <li>• Communications strategy;</li> <li>• Member Training and Development Programme</li> </ul> </li> <li>7) Communicate to others who work with us our expectations for compliance with ethical standards through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service level agreements;</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contracts and procurement processes;</li> <li>• Partnership agreements;</li> <li>• Sponsorship agreements</li> </ul>
<b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checking ethical compliance at governing body level though promoting good behaviour and annual Monitoring Officer checks;</li> <li>• In the Member Survey we ask a question to test awareness of ethical standards and how individual Members contribute to maintaining them. The Member Survey for 2022/23 was issued in December 2022, due to the impacts of the organisational change and the impacts of the high turnover in Members during 2023 the analysis of the survey results has only being completed in 2024/25.</li> <li>• The Chair of the Authority and the Statutory Officers, the Management Team, Authority Solicitor/Monitoring Officer and Customer &amp; Democratic Support Manager are involved in preparing the Annual Governance Statement and it is considered and approved by the Authority meeting following scrutiny by the External Auditors;</li> <li>• Employee terms and conditions, values-based set of behaviours and completed appraisal forms;</li> <li>• Delivering an ongoing programme of ethical awareness training and including a session on standards and ethics in the annual compulsory planning training delivered to all Members;</li> <li>• Resources Policies and Procedures;</li> <li>• Member Training and Development Plans;</li> <li>• Performance Management (appraisal) process;</li> <li>• Corporate training programme and developing the Management Team;</li> <li>• Procurement Strategy and Contract Procedure Rules;</li> <li>• Conduct included within revised employee statement of terms and conditions;</li> <li>• Tender and contract documentation including Standing Orders;</li> <li>• Due Diligence Panel (DDP), chaired by the Monitoring Officer, looks at issues such as reputation and environmental impact when considering giving and sponsorship offers;</li> <li>• Registers of in-kind and financial sponsorship and giving under £5,000 and register of One Team (staff, Members and Volunteers) benefits reviewed by the DDP every 6 months with offers over £5000 being considered on a case by case basis. From 2024/25 these registers will be reviewed on an annual basis in October;</li> <li>• Register for additional employment over grade H.</li> </ul>
<b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every two years the Authority carries out a survey of Members to get feedback on the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Strategic and External Leadership</li> <li>◦ Governance and Scrutiny</li> <li>◦ Contribution and Development</li> <li>◦ Communication</li> <li>◦ Community Engagement</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Members' survey was due to take place during 2018 but following the Member decision to carry out a review of governance arrangements the next survey was deferred until the end of 2022.</li> <li>• The Member Survey for 2022/23 was issued in December 2022 with an extension of time for completion, to enable all Members to participate, being given to March 2023. Due to the impacts of the organisational change and the impacts of the high turnover in Members during 2023 the full analysis of the survey results was delayed to 2024/25.</li> <li>• In the 2022/23 Members Survey 96% (26) of Members responding agreed that they were aware of the Authority's ethical framework and how they contribute to maintaining high ethical standards. 4% (2) Neither agreed nor disagreed.</li> </ul>

- The annual Member planning training events were held on 20 September and 18 October 2024, these were compulsory for Members of the Planning Committee.
- The 2023/24 Annual External Audit Report in February 2025 confirmed the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 had been reviewed and concluded that there were no matters to report and that it was consistent with their understanding.
- The Due Diligence Panel met twice during 2024/25, it considered a legacy donation and reviewed the in-kind and financial sponsorship and giving under £5,000 and register of One Team (staff, Members and Volunteers) benefits. The Panel also presented their annual report to the P&R Committee in December 2024.

### **Sub Principle: A (3) Respecting the rule of law - We Will:**

- 8) Progress achievement of our Corporate Strategy through full use of our powers and in doing so:
  - identify any risks of legal challenge as appropriate;
  - ensure Members and Officers receive legal advice on case work and policy/procedure development as appropriate;
  - ensure appropriate Standing Orders are in place
- 9) Support the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer roles through protocols, direct access to Members and the Chief Executive and involvement in key decision-making processes.
- 10) Ensure both the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer have appropriate resources to fulfil their roles as required by the legislation.
- 11) Respond to any external or internal advice or comments received on the legality of our decisions, policies, processes and procedures including from the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer.
- 12) Respond to any allegations of corruption and misuse of power in accordance with our framework of policies.

### **What evidence/assurance is in place?**

- Standing Orders are regularly reviewed and updated;
- External scrutiny by External Audit, Internal Audit, Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, Defra, HM Revenue and Customs, Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Communities and Local Government and Housing Act;
- Three statutory roles in place of:
  - Head of Paid Service;
  - Chief Finance Officer (also Member of Resource Management Meeting ("RMM")) (s114 Finance Act 1988);
  - Monitoring Officer (also Member of RMM) (s5 Local Government and Housing Act 1989);
- Job descriptions and Learning and Development plans are in place for individuals holding the above roles;
- Compliance with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in local government;
- CFO is actively involved in all material business decisions and strategy development;
- Monitoring Officer Protocol is in place;
- Job descriptions for the Chair and Authority Members;
- Outside Body advice to Members appointed to an outside body;
- RMM procedures to make sure internal consultation takes place on proposals;
- Leadership approach with "voices round the table" making sure the relevant staff are involved, Legal Team Work Programme in place to support the Authority Plan;
- Legal risks identified in delegated reports and reports to Authority and Standing Committees and Resource Management Meeting;
- Delegation to Officers indicates where delegated decisions need sign off from the Legal Team;

- VfM Review on Legal Services;
- Arrangements in place to report to relevant bodies when issues arise e.g. Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Fraud and Corruption, Data Protection;
- Anti-Fraud and Corruption and Confidential Reporting policies in place and are regularly reviewed against the CIPFA code of practice on managing the risk of fraud and corruption;
- Examples of cases where policy has been tested;
- Standards Framework in place including the Authority's arrangements for considering complaints against Members.

### **Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness**

- The Authority's certification programme includes a combined Information Security/Data Protection course. This ensures that staff undertake refresher training every two years. All associated data protection policies have been embedded throughout the Authority and provision of advice and security incidents – both involving personal data and IT are logged. The Authority received substantial reassurance from the GDPR Internal Audit report in January 2021 and ensuring the clear desk policy is maintained is a priority as staff have returned and office space is now at a premium. Work is still continuing with the information asset register and the application of retention policies.
- The Authority has a duty to keep its constitutional documents up to date. The Authority's Standing Orders and supporting documents are regularly reviewed and where appropriate updated to reflect organisational needs, best practice and changes to legislation. Standing Orders are currently being reviewed by the Governance Review Working Group.
- Standing Orders relating to Contracts were updated in February 2025 to reflect changes to procurement legislation.
- Received a positive unqualified opinion on the statement of accounts and a satisfactory conclusion on value for money from our External Auditors.
- Agreed the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25 to include reports on budget setting, monitoring and reporting, rent reviews, leases and concessions, Moors for the Future, Income, Reserves, Volunteering and Management.
- Responded to three internal audit reports from 2023/24 on Vehicles (reasonable assurance), Creditors (substantial assurance), Main Accounting (reasonable assurance) and three internal audit reports for 2024/25 on Budget Setting, Monitoring and Reporting (reasonable assurance), Rent Reviews, Leases and Concessions (reasonable assurance) and Moors for the Future (substantial assurance). Management have responded to the following priority actions: Vehicles – 2 Moderate, Main Accounting - 1 Moderate, Budget Setting, Monitoring and Reporting – 4 Moderate, Rent Reviews, Leases and Concessions – 2 Significant and 1 Moderate.
- The 2023/24 annual assurance report from the Internal Auditor was received by the Authority in July 2024 and gave an overall opinion on the framework of governance, risk management and control operating in the Authority that it provides Substantial Assurance. No reliance was placed on the work of other assurance bodies in reaching that opinion. The report also stated there were no significant control weaknesses which, in the opinion of the Head of Internal Audit, needed to be considered for inclusion in the Annual Governance Statement. The Internal Audit annual report for 2024/25 is not expected to be received until July 2025.
- It has previously been decided that, in reviewing our performance against our Code of Corporate Governance, any area where the Authority has received a limited level (or no level) of assurance from the Internal Auditors will be identified in our Annual Governance Statement as an issue affecting effectiveness. During 2023/24 none of the Internal Audit reports fell into this category.
- Responded to complaints investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) now reporting annually to Members. For 2024/25 one decision has been received; the Ombudsman declined to investigate as the Complainant had used their right to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate and had not suffered any significant injustice with regard to the remaining issues raised.
- The Authority's arrangements for handling Member Code of Conduct complaints are in place and published. Two complaints were received during 2024/25 which were subsequently withdrawn.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We received a number of grants from Defra, similar to previous years. The NPG grant is static for 24/25 at £6.7m, however, we also received a supplementary grant of £500k to be split equally between capital and revenue expenditure. This was in recognition of inflationary rises borne by the Authority. We received the Biodiversity Net Gain grant again for £27k. We received £155k Access for All funding. FIPL funding for 2024/25 increased to £2.6m.</li> <li>• Details of the NPG grant for 25/26 were received in February 2025. Then revenue grant has been cut by 9%. We have been allowed to convert £100k of FIPL revenue funding to top up the core grant and received £20k towards National Parks England subscriptions. Taking into account both of these elements, this equates to a 6.4% reduction in core revenue grant. In place of the revenue cut, we will receive a capital grant of £1.6m. The criteria outlined for spending being innovation, invest to save and income generation. This also includes capital expenditure on 30 by 30 initiative.</li> </ul>
<b>(B) Core Principle - Making sure of openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</b>
<b>Sub Principle: B (1) Openness – We Will:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Support our commitment to a culture of openness and transparency through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fulfilling our obligations under the Freedom of Information/Environmental Information legislation;</li> <li>○ Publicising decisions and information through our website and through web broadcasting of our committees;</li> <li>○ Be open and transparent in all our decision making except, where justified, the exemptions under Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act apply.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2) Document evidence for decisions by recording criteria, rationale and data relied upon - using processes proportionate to the impact and risk of the decisions being made.</li> </ol>
<b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance and Business Plan published;</li> <li>• Monthly and Annual Authority Solicitor Reports to Planning Committee;</li> <li>• Creation of data protection policies, data protection staff training plan and rollout with appropriate tools and monitoring, robust processes where personal/sensitive data is created or used as part of wider operations;</li> <li>• Use of robust data processor agreements where 3<sup>rd</sup> parties hold or process personal/sensitive data on the Authority's behalf;</li> <li>• Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme and disclosure log;</li> <li>• Appointment of Senior Information Risk Owner, Lead Information Asset Owner and departmental Information Asset Owners;</li> <li>• Corporate Strategy 2019-2024 and Authority Plan 2023 - 2028;</li> <li>• Financial information including outturns, Statement of Accounts and External Audit reports published on our website;</li> <li>• Local Government Transparency Code 2015 - information is published on the website and includes spending over £250, credit card spending, tenders, income from parking, organisation structures and senior salaries, trade union facility time, pay multiples, land and property assets;</li> <li>• Publish information under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Public Sector Equality Duties) and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 to publish workforce profile information by "protected characteristics" (gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation and pay grade);</li> <li>• Publishing prescribed information about our gender pay gap results in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017;</li> <li>• Standing Orders make sure that exempt items are kept to a minimum and where possible an open report is provided to summarise the decision to be made and allow public participation;</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents relating to meetings of the Authority and its Committees along with key governance documents, such as Standing Orders are published on the Authority website;</li> <li>• Provisions in place allowing reporting on meetings and providing an audio-visual webcast of meetings of the Authority and its Committees;</li> <li>• Publish work programmes for the Authority and its Committees;</li> <li>• Committee Reports and Minutes;</li> <li>• Resource Management Meeting business cases and minutes;</li> <li>• Standing Orders (Delegation to Committees, Delegation to Officers, Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules);</li> <li>• Corporate Report Templates that include headings for key areas that must be taken into account in writing reports such as Financial, HR, Equality and Legal advice, Climate Change considerations;</li> <li>• Service protocols on recording decisions/file notes e.g. site visit file notes, HR forms and decisions, tender book;</li> <li>• Planning and other reports for recording delegated decisions.</li> </ul>
<b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Strategy 2019-24 and Authority Plan 2023 - 2028 in place.</li> <li>• The Authority audio visually broadcasts its Authority and Committee meetings via YouTube and offers a watch again facility on the internet. The recordings are retained and published for three years after the date of the meeting.</li> <li>• New corporate report templates agreed and implemented August 2024 including key area headings which must be completed.</li> </ul>
<b>Sub Principle: B (2) Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders – We Will:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3) Ensure the National Park Management Plan is a partnership Plan for the place with partners and stakeholders owning the delivery plan for the place.</li> <li>4) Engage with constituent and surrounding councils and stakeholders through a programme of Chief Executive and Member meetings.</li> <li>5) Engage with bodies representative of different voices inside and outside of the National Park.</li> <li>6) Maximise our partnership approach to achieving more for the place through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strategic National Park Management Partnership Plan process and delivery</li> <li>○ Operational delivery partnerships;</li> <li>○ National NPA partnerships;</li> <li>○ Sponsorship relationships;</li> <li>○ Shared commissioning of evidence for Local Plans across the wider Peak District;</li> <li>○ Sign up to agreed Statements of Common Ground on cross boundary planning policy issues</li> </ul> </li> <li>7) Review our relationship management framework.</li> <li>8) Ensure appropriate due diligence, programme management and contractual processes are in place to support partnerships</li> <li>9) Implement a programme of surveys and research so we can connect more to people and respond to feedback from people who use the National Park and our services</li> <li>10) Consult and engage communities and stakeholders on the development of our policies and strategies.</li> <li>11) Consult and engage with people on specific actions that might affect them.</li> </ol>
<b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b>

- National Park Management Plan Delivery Plan;
- National Park Management Plan Partnership and Delivery Groups and annual report;
- In December 2022 the Authority adopted the National Park Management Plan 2023-28 and Authority Plan 2023-28 to commence from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.
- Programme of meetings between Chief Executive and other councils (both constituent authorities councils and the wider peak district authorities) sometimes including the Chair of the Authority and Leaders;
- Programme of meetings between Chief Executive and other key stakeholders;
- Local Access Forum;
- Annual Parishes Day and regular meetings with the Peak Park Parishes Forum (PPPF);
- Participation in meetings of combined authorities;
- Engagement by the CEO with the meetings of Derbyshire Chief Executives and of South Yorkshire Combined Authority Chief Executives
- Engagement with Defra and other Government departments;
- LEP Membership;
- Engagement with Business Peak District, Nature Peak District (Peak District Nature Recovery Steering Group) and Visit Peak District and Derbyshire;
- Peak District Land Managers' Forum
- Appointments to Outside Bodies and supporting guidance;
- National Park Authority draft internal and external communications plans;
- Partnership working when preparing bids and delivering externally funded projects;
- Examples of Partnerships such as Moors for the Future, Generation Green Coalition and Service Level Agreements e.g. Derbyshire County Council for payroll services;
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme Local Assessment Panel including key stakeholder organisation, farmer and land manager representatives;
- A range of studies delivered helping to shape Local Plan policies;
- Partnership Policy and Protocol;
- Due Diligence Panel and registers
- Engagement with Heads of Planning Groups (e.g. Derbyshire, South Yorkshire, English National Parks)
- Engagement with the Directors of Conservation/Nature Recovery Leads across all UK National Park Authorities
- Trails Steering Group
- Trans Pennine Trail Partnership
- Stanage Forum

#### **Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness**

- Approved the new reporting process for the Moors for the Future Partnership for a Business Strategy to 2030 and an Annual Business Plan. The plan included the commitments in the financial year 2024/25 and the Strategy allowed for planning for the future to 2030.
- National Park Authorities work together and have service level agreements for communications and provision of new Member induction.
- With support from the Authority, the Local Access Forum has continued to engage with our constituent Authorities to see how the Forum and the Authorities can work together on issues such as Green Lanes, reviewing Rights of Way Improvement Plans and other rights of way and access issues.
- Continued with meetings between constituent councils and the Chief Executive and Chair.
- The Authority has observer status at any meetings of Derbyshire combined authorities' and has Officer and Member observer involvement in South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority meetings.
- Business Peak District, Nature Peak District (Peak District Nature Recovery Steering Group) and Visit Peak District and Derbyshire continue to work together to produce a package of interventions to attract investment from Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- Continued our programme of working with local authorities within and on the edges of the



National Park at a strategic and operational level to help deepen understanding. This includes a memorandum of understanding with Derbyshire authorities on the duty to cooperate in relation to planning.

- Moors for the Future Partnership continues to deliver landscape scale conservation, science and communications in 2025, with circa £3m of peatland restoration work planned in the 2025-26 financial year. Water company Asset Management Period 7 (AMP7 2020-2025) has seen MFFP successfully evolve our funding base from a proportionately high reliance on grant funding (EU LIFE et al), through the two previous water company investment periods (AMPs 5 & 6). The present funding mix remains blended as in previous AMP periods, but grant funds account for circa one third of the total funding commitments. The remainder has been secured from private sector partner funding and other direct funding (including Green Finance) from our partner base. This has increased the diversity of funding in the programme intentionally, and as a result the financial operating resilience of the team is improved, and both the pace and scale of the work continue to grow year on year. In tandem with our ongoing programme of delivery, in Q1/2 of 2025/26 the partnership will be agreeing the collaborative work with water company partners for the period 2025-30 (AMP8), where significant further investment (circa <£20m) is expected to maintain strong progress toward the partnership vision of a resilient and sustainable peatland landscape. This level of investment will see the pace and scale of the programme continuing to grow meeting the dual climate and biodiversity loss crisis. This level of engagement has been approved through PDNP Authority, and has SMT and member support. The projects will be monitored by the Project, Risk, Budget Monitoring committee group.
- Morridge Hill Country Landscape Recovery project funding of £750,000 from Defra as one of the successful Round Two Landscape Recovery Pilot Projects was confirmed in May 2024. The project development phase is for two years from 1 May 2024 to 30 April 2026 and is based on the Authority owned Warslow Moors Estate together with land owned/managed by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, the Ministry of Defence and private owners. The aim of the project is to develop a sustainable and resilient farm business model for tenanted and owner-occupied farm businesses using both public and private/green finance to deliver nature recovery at a landscape scale. The project area has been extended during 2024/25 and now extends to 2,900 ha in the South West Peak National Character Area.
- Ongoing partnership working with user groups and residents to develop management plans in relation to the most-visited estates/assets, namely North Lees and the Trails.
- Due Diligence Panel met twice in 2024/25 and considered a legacy donation and reviewed the registers. The Panel also presented its annual report to the Programmes and Resources Committee in December 2024.

**Sub Principle: B (3) Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively - We Will:**

- 12) Underpin our Corporate Strategy outcome of enabling everyone to connect with the National Park with a sound evidence base including:
  - Feedback from customers using our services;
  - Research on best ways to engage with target audiences;
  - Formal consultation processes;
  - Feedback from bodies representative of different voices inside and outside of the National Park.
- 13) Update our communications plan to support our outreach programme and make sure it explains how we will feedback on 'you said'- 'we did'.
- 14) Develop an integrated approach to engaging with communities through our Engagement, Policy and Communities functions.
- 15) Continue to support Members in their community role.
- 16) Ensure our complaints procedures and reporting arrangements are accessible and transparent and monitor our response to complaints received to ensure the Authority learns from that feedback.

<p>17) Ensure our long term National Park Management Plan (supported by the Local Plan) gives direction to short term decision making processes so that our aspirations for the condition of the special qualities of the National Park into the future can be achieved.</p> <p>18) Ensure the work to transform the most degraded upland landscape across Europe, The Dark Peak and South Pennines, continues on its present positive trajectory through the Moors for the Future Partnership.</p>
<p><b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys (Residents, Visitors, Bus Users, Planning, Customer feedback and the Service User Survey (Includes Customer and Democratic Support, learning and discovery, visitor centres, cycle hire, conservation volunteers and ranger guided walks);</li> <li>• Use of Park Life, press releases, website and social media to promote current consultations/issue/campaigns;</li> <li>• Consultation page on Authority Website listing active consultation and how to participate;</li> <li>• Summary of consultation responses in Committee reports;</li> <li>• Public Participation at meetings;</li> <li>• National Park Authority draft internal and external communications plans;</li> <li>• User Groups (e.g. Stanage Forum, Local Access Forum);</li> <li>• Work with lobbying partners such as CPRE/Friends of the Peak District, National Parks UK, Campaign for National Parks;</li> <li>• Learning and development programme;</li> <li>• Outside bodies appointments;</li> <li>• Evidence of community and stakeholder meetings;</li> <li>• Role descriptions in place for Chair and Members;</li> <li>• Officer Delegation for Planning – Parish Objection brings an application to Committee;</li> <li>• Statutory duty to consult (e.g. Traffic Regulation Orders);</li> <li>• Responding to consultation from Government and partners;</li> <li>• Evidenced in Committee reports which includes sustainability heading in the report template;</li> <li>• National Park Management Plan;</li> <li>• Communicating in Plain English;</li> <li>• Parish bulletins.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have reviewed our service users survey to ensure relevant data is captured and developed online versions to appeal to all visitors and service users.</li> <li>• Parishes newsletter sent out regularly to all Parish Councils and Meetings within National Park Boundary</li> <li>• Local Plan questionnaires and surveys</li> <li>• Community Engagement - We have a page on our website which details how the Authority can help Communities including neighbourhood and village plans and developing community led projects. A communities small grant scheme is also available.</li> <li>• Regular Chief Executive update reports to Authority meetings</li> <li>• Started regular Chief Executive Roadshows around the National Park giving the public chance to raise issues directly with the Chief Executive. These have continued through 2024/25.</li> <li>• Role description for Members reviewed and updated by the Governance Review Working Group. Role of Member Champions discontinued in favour of encouraging more involvement by all Members.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(C) Core Principle Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and</b></p>

**environmental benefits.**

**Sub Principle: C (1) Defining Outcomes – We Will:**

- 1) Clearly communicate the vision and outcomes for the National Park through the National Park Management Plan supported by the Authority Plan, Local Plan, the Landscape Strategy, the Wooded Landscape Plan and the Peak District Nature Recovery Plan providing the strategic direction for the Authority.
- 2) Clearly communicate our five-year Authority Plan, our medium-term financial plan and our one-year Performance and Business plan actions and priorities to the public, stakeholders and partners.
- 3) Ensure our five-year Authority Plan and medium-term financial planning processes are aligned and reviewed annually and bi-annually.
- 4) Put arrangements in place to implement our risk policy and strategy at all levels in the Authority so that informed decisions can be made on what level of risk to accept and what mitigating action needs to be in place to reduce or remove the risk to achieving outcomes.
- 5) Communicate our priorities internally and externally through the five-year Authority Plan and Annual Performance & Business Plan.
- 6) Be clear about standards of service to be provided within resources available.

**What evidence/assurance is in place?**

- Authority Plan and Medium term (3-5 years) strategic and financial planning strategy;
- National Park Management Plan (NPMP), and Annual Monitoring Report supported by National Park Management Plan Partnership and Delivery Groups – includes performance against targets;
- Local Plan (Core Strategy and Development Management Policies) and supporting documents including: Annual Monitoring Reports, Local Development Scheme, Statement of Community Involvement and Supplementary Planning Guidance;
- Annual Performance and Business Plan includes performance against targets;
- Partnership Policy and Protocol and Review;
- Participation in local area forums and local partnerships e.g. Business Peak District;
- New National Park Management Plan 2023-28 adopted;
- Service Plans including risk registers;
- Sustainability heading included in report templates;
- Environmental Management Policy and Carbon Management Plan of Action with progress reports;
- Risk Management Policy and Strategy;
- Corporate Risk Register and monitoring;
- Risk based Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan;
- Information Technology Disaster Recovery Plan;
- Business Continuity Plan including Crisis Management Procedures;
- Health and Safety Policy, support and annual report to Management Team and Programmes and Resources Committee;
- Insurance Policies;
- Building security systems;
- Annual Performance and Business Plan;
- Annual Statement of Accounts.

**Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness**

- The Authority adopted the Development Management Policies and Policies Map in May

<p>2019 to form part 2 of the adopted Local Plan for the National Park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Authority also amended the standard S106 agreement for locally needed affordable homes to allow for the insertion of a “Mortgagee in Possession” clause, on terms to be agreed by the Authority Solicitor in consultation with the Head of Planning.</li> <li>• Spatial outcomes in Local Plan to be reviewed through comprehensive review and engagement process.</li> <li>• Work has continued to develop the Nature Recovery Plan for the place with partners with a final version shared with Authority members and adopted in April 2024. The National Park Authority’s role in the development of the 6 constituent authority’s Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) is as a supporting authority. The Peak District Nature Recovery Plan will be used to support and influence the 6 LNRS as well as the National Park Management Plan and Local Plan. Further development of the Peak District Nature Recovery Plan will take place through the development of a guidance map and delivery plan once the Authority’s contribution to the 6 LNRS has been completed in 2025/26.</li> <li>• In 2024 appointed a Member representative to both the Derbyshire and Staffordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy groups.</li> <li>• Agreed the arrangements for the National Park Authority to sign up to and agree Statements of Common Ground with constituent authorities and other relevant bodies as part of the duty to cooperate in producing Local Plans.</li> <li>• Adopted a Local Validation Checklist for Planning Applications.</li> <li>• Approved a lawful development certificate checklist.</li> <li>• Pre-application planning advice service recommenced.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sub Principle: C (2) Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits – We Will:</b></p>
<p>7) Ensure our strategic and financial planning delivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Our purposes and socio-economic duty balancing environmental, social and economic impact;</li> <li>○ Consideration of conflicting interests informed by our consultation processes;</li> <li>○ Long term financial sustainability of the Authority through diversifying our sources of funding, supported by a sustainable capital programme;</li> <li>○ An approximate forecast for short term service and financial decision making.</li> </ul> <p>8) Implement our Equalities Policy to ensure fair access to services.</p>
<p><b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital Programme to 2027/28 – reviewed and approved by the Authority in April 2024;</li> <li>• Capital Investment Strategy;</li> <li>• Annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Capital Strategy</li> <li>• Asset Management Plan;</li> <li>• Committee report templates include corporate implication headings which must be completed;</li> <li>• Record of decision making and supporting materials;</li> <li>• Consultation embodied in reports to Committee and delegated decisions;</li> <li>• Following statutory guidance;</li> <li>• Customer Service Standards;</li> <li>• Equalities Impact Assessment of our plans e.g. Development Management Policies document;</li> <li>• Performance indicators and success measures for National Park Management Plan, Authority Plan and service actions;</li> <li>• Customer Satisfaction Surveys;</li> <li>• Complaints procedure and annual reports;</li> <li>• Service and corporate improvement plans.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to</b></p>

## effectiveness

- Approved delegation to the Chief Executive to determine whether an appropriate assessment is required under regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and where required carry out the assessment.
- Undertake updates of housing delivery through annual monitoring and topic reporting as part of Local Plan review from 2021 through to summer 2025.
- Asset Management Plan approved by Authority.
- The Programmes and Resources Committee - Climate Change Member Task Group established in 2019, it was later agreed to change this to a Steering Group with amended Terms of Reference and Members were appointed annually at the Authority AGM. The Steering Group ended on 31<sup>st</sup> March as it had successfully embedded climate change into the new National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan.
- The Authority has contributed to and endorsed the National Parks England Climate Change Position Statement.

The Authority was commissioned to carry out a further Environmental Land Management (ELM) Test and Trail on National Park Authorities' role as local convenor and in local delivery on behalf the English National Park Authorities. The test looked at five areas and the following is a summary of the key recommendations:

- Strategic planning - National Park Management Plans should set out the **focussed role** of National Parks in nature recovery and Local Nature Recovery Strategies should take **special consideration** of National Parks.
- Partnership working - further development of **partnership working** at multi strategic and delivery levels with both Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) & environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (eNGOs) is required.
- Local priorities - a **Whole Farm Plan** approach, a single, accessible 'platform' and a National Parks/Protected Landscape **bespoke projects fund**.
- Advice - support and enable advice and collaboration models through the development of an Adviser network, information sharing platform and an **Adviser Forum**. Also option **endorsement** and **local tailoring** for ELMs options and actions.
- Private finance - National Park Authorities should explore becoming the **Responsible Body** for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) with **quality assurance and environmental broker roles** also explored depending on the individual circumstances of each National Park Authority.

Closer collaboration with other Protected Landscapes also recommended.

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has funded £2.6m of farmer/land manager led projects delivering for climate, nature, people and place.
- A legislative constitutional framework has been introduced which creates a new category of Retained EU Law (now known as Assimilated Law) to avoid uncertainty and gaps in UK law after 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, when EU law ceased to apply in the UK. This retains many of the EU laws which were in force and applicable prior to Brexit, effectively incorporating them into UK law, distinguishing them from EU law and allowing them to develop differently in the future.
- The Carbon Management Plan progress report 2023/24 was reported to the Programmes and Resources Committee in September 2024.
- The Climate Change overview was reported to the Programmes and Resources Committee in September 2024 and the Landscape and Nature Recovery overview will be reported in April 2025.
- Joint Working Group on Housing with Derbyshire Dales District Council started in March 2024.
- Quarterly enforcement meetings held with Chief Executive, Head of Planning, Principal Enforcement Planner and relevant Area Planning Managers as we continue to reduce the backlog of cases and transfer to the new structure of integrated Development Management and Enforcement Teams.
- Annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Capital Strategy approved by the

<p>Authority in March 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New customer satisfaction survey commenced February 2025.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(D) Core Principle - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</b></p>
<p><b>Sub Principle: D (1) Determining interventions – We Will:</b></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Deliver our five-year Authority Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Using research and data to inform recommendations on interventions to achieve our strategy;</li> <li>○ Seeking and responding to feedback from customers and stakeholders on our services;</li> <li>○ Agreeing annual priority actions that are key interventions for the forthcoming year;</li> <li>○ Funded service plan actions flowing from priority interventions agreed;</li> <li>○ Business case options appraisals.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2) Work with partners in delivering the NPMP priority ambitions for the special qualities of the National Park.</li> <li>3) Work with communities through neighbourhood planning and other community planning processes and achieve our ambitions for special qualities.</li> </ol>
<p><b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda Planning Meetings and Committee work programmes;</li> <li>• Contract Procedure Rules and Procurement Strategy;</li> <li>• Effective procurement processes along with examples of smarter procurement and collaboration;</li> <li>• Programme of value for money reviews;</li> <li>• National Park benchmarking;</li> <li>• External Audit value for money conclusion;</li> <li>• Annual service and budgeting planning process identifying efficiency savings and different ways of doing things;</li> <li>• Disposal Guidance;</li> <li>• Resource Management Team business case process;</li> <li>• Financial Strategy;</li> <li>• Consultation results summarised in reports to decision makers;</li> <li>• Public Participation Scheme for all meetings of the Authority and its Committees;</li> <li>• Authority Plan updates highlight actions and interventions with communities (including grants and progress on neighbourhood plans);</li> <li>• Reporting on progress with the NPMP through the Delivery Group with annual report to members.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Committee receives reports on planning service performance including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ The speed of determining applications for major development;</li> <li>➢ The quality of decisions made by the authority on applications for major development;</li> <li>➢ The speed of determining applications for non-major development;</li> <li>➢ The quality of decisions made by the authority on applications for non-major development.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Carried out the annual review of the minerals &amp; local finance plan.</li> <li>• Designated that part of Hayfield parish that is within the Peak District National Park boundary</li> </ul>

<p>as a neighbourhood area under Schedule 9 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Committee adopted the Peak District National Park Transport Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as part of the Authority's suite of Development Management Documents.</li> <li>• Adoption of Supplementary Planning Document for Residential Annexes in 2021.</li> <li>• Adoption of Supplementary Planning Document for conversion of historic buildings in January 2022.</li> <li>• Work Programmes published for meetings of the Authority and its Committees.</li> <li>• Continued to facilitate a large number of speakers at Authority and Committee meetings through our Public Participation Scheme.</li> <li>• A review of the Public Participation Scheme by the Governance Review Working Group was started during 2024 but is still to conclude.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sub Principle: D (2) Planning Intervention – We Will:</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4) Implement our strategic and financial planning cycle for development, review and monitoring of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NPMP;</li> <li>• Local Plan;</li> <li>• Corporate Strategy;</li> <li>• Medium Term Financial Plan;</li> <li>• Performance and Business Plan;</li> <li>• Service Plans.</li> </ul> </li> <li>5) Engage with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NPMP partnership;</li> <li>• Planning policy consultation;</li> <li>• Landscape scale partnerships;</li> <li>• Operational partnerships;</li> <li>• Regular communication with bodies representative of the different 'voices' inside and outside of the National Park.</li> </ul> </li> <li>6) Ensure our risk management policy, strategy and processes cover risk management for partnerships.</li> <li>7) Make sure that our Procurement Strategy and Contract Procedure Rules are robust but provide additional flexibility when needed.</li> <li>8) Implement a performance management system with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identified measures of success/indicators and targets which cascade into service plans and individual objectives;</li> <li>• half yearly monitoring and annual repointing of performance;</li> <li>• identified leads for data owners and data collectors with appropriate checks on quality of information.</li> </ul> </li> <li>9) Support achievement of our Medium-Term Financial Plan for revenue and capital expenditure with annual financial planning processes culminating in an Annual Budget being recommended to the Authority by March.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Plans to include plans and timescales for reviewing key plans and policies;</li> <li>• A work programme is maintained and published for meetings of the Authority and its Committees;</li> <li>• Internal Communications Plan;</li> <li>• Media protocol;</li> <li>• Evidence base for National Park Management Plan, Strategies, Local Plan;</li> <li>• Residents and Service User Surveys;</li> </ul>

- Constituent Council and Parish Council liaison meetings;
- New National Park Management Plan 2023-28 agreed by the Authority on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022. Supported by NPMP Partnership Group to oversee and review delivery;
- Partnership Policy and Protocols;
- Risk Management Policy and Strategy with Corporate Risk Register and Service level Risk Registers;
- Procurement Strategy and Contract Procedure Rules;
- Performance Management Framework including monitoring and reporting on performance biannually and year end;
- NPMP, Local Plan, Corporate, National Park Family and service indicators;
- Annual Performance and Business Plan;
- Grant Memorandum and Vision Statement agreed with Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs);
- Medium Term (3-4 years) Strategic and Financial Planning Strategy;
- Authority Plan;
- Defra 8 Point Plan for National Parks.

### **Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness**

- Planning Committee considered a summary of the work carried out by the Monitoring & Enforcement Team over the year April 2023 – March 2024. The Committee also received quarterly performance reports setting out details of breaches that had been resolved in that quarter. The majority of breaches of planning control were resolved voluntarily or through negotiation with the landowner (or other relevant persons) without resorting to formal enforcement action.
- Approved the work plan for the Programmes and Resources Committee for 2024-2025.
- The Management Team of the Chief Executive and Heads of Service have continued to meet monthly to discuss performance and identify ways of working together to address issues where performance targets may be off target.
- A new Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring Members group was set up to replace the Budget Monitoring Members group in July 2024. The Group has been created to consider and have oversight of internal and external audit, capital and revenue budget monitoring and project risk to provide Members with confidence these are being managed effectively and efficiently. It will meet on a quarterly basis.
- Standing Orders relating to Contracts updated in February 2025 to reflect changes to procurement legislation.

### **Sub Principle: D (3) Optimising achievement of intended outcomes – We Will:**

- 10) Implement our Medium-Term Financial Plan by:
- Implementing a programme of reducing input costs to those areas given strategic certainty;
  - Managing the capital programme, focusing on investing in income generating projects.
  - Being clear on the full cost of operations and the categorisation of capital versus revenue expenditure.
  - Increasing our income from giving and working strategically with the Peak District National Park Foundation.
  - Achieving our commercial programme income targets, led by our new Business Change Manager.
  - Developing/establishing sponsorship relations;
  - Securing external funding for major programme and partnership delivery;
  - Make sure the budgeting process is all inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operation over the medium and longer term. Realigning budgets to areas impacted by inflationary price increases.



<p>11) Make sure that the Medium Term Financial Strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage.</p> <p>12) Maximise the social value/return to the public on every pound spent through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering eco system services;</li> <li>• Procuring services and goods well;</li> <li>• Reducing the Authority's carbon footprint;</li> <li>• Planning gain.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback surveys and exit/decommissioning strategies with evidence of changes as a result;</li> <li>• Budgeting guidance and protocols;</li> <li>• Member Budget Workshops;</li> <li>• Budget Monitoring meetings with Members (Q2, Q3 and outturn) via the new Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring Group;</li> <li>• Budget monitoring report considered by officer performance monitoring group (Q2, Q3 and outturn);</li> <li>• Medium Term (3-5 years) Strategic and Financial Planning Strategy;</li> <li>• National Park Purposes;</li> <li>• Authority Plan;</li> <li>• Social Value in contracts above the EU threshold;</li> <li>• Contract Procedure Rules;</li> <li>• Section 106 Register of Legal Agreements.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members continued to be involved in preparing the 2025/26 Budget through a Business Planning Workshop held in September 2024.</li> <li>• The 2017/18 AGS identified a remaining risk/concern in relation to meeting the corporate objective of diversifying and growing income. Specifically, there remained a risk to the scale and speed of diversification and growth. There was a need for the Strategic Commercial Plan to set out the process, activities, skills and investment required to deliver the Corporate Strategy plus the potential returns (scale and timeframe) from the implementation of the Plan.</li> <li>• In the 2018/19 AGS it was recognised that there still remained issues around the culture of the Authority and its ability to deliver commercial ambitions.</li> <li>• While these issues remain, solid progress has been made on a number of fronts. Work has progressed with Heads of Service to encourage more significant partnership grant applications with success in particular for Moors for the Future; Millers Dale goods shed, Morridge Hill Country, Discover England and Generation Green project. New avenues of strategic funding are being actively explored with PDNPA as a partner via D2N2; LEP; Universities bordering The Peak District and major infrastructure projects e.g. A628 upgrade.</li> <li>• The Peak District National Park is one of forty-four Protected Landscapes receiving Farming in Protected Landscapes programme funding. Originally for three years from 2021/22 through to 2023/24 the programme was extended for a fourth year 2024/25 and with an increase in budget. The programme has continued to be well received and recognised and has received further funding for 2025/26. The project fund allocation for the Peak District National Park was increased from £1.3M to £1.9M for 2023/24 and £2.6M for 2024/25. For 2025/26 a project fund allocation of £1.6m has been provided. Further work is on-going to explore the future of the programme beyond 31 March 2026 with funding already allocated for the Engagement Officers.</li> <li>• Our charitable foundation is now launched and raising income through visitor giving,</li> </ul>

<p>donations and sponsorship. This is helping to change mindsets amongst volunteers, employees and Members. Finally, relationships with a selection of major industries are being nurtured to develop a collective investment fund which will sustain delivery of nature and carbon outcomes at a landscape scale.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Authority's Revenue Budget for 2025/26 was approved at the March 2025 Authority meeting.</li> <li>• A new Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring Members group was set up to replace the Budget Monitoring Members group in July 2024. The Group has been created to consider and have oversight of internal and external audit, capital and revenue budget monitoring and project risk to provide Members with confidence these are being managed effectively and efficiently. It meets on a quarterly basis.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(E) Core Principle - Developing the Authority's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</b></p>
<p><b>Sub Principle: E (1) Developing the Authority's capacity – We Will:</b></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Maximise the impact of our three roles of regulatory, influencing and doing by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing value for money in achieving our outputs and outcomes through service and performance reviews. This will include benchmarking and looking for opportunities for business process improvement, smarter procurement and reduction in input costs;</li> <li>• implementation of our Information Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan;</li> <li>• working with others to seek opportunities to work more effectively together, understanding the relationship between what we do and what others do to avoid duplication of effort.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2) Use performance data and trend analysis to guide decision making.</li> <li>3) Use research data and benchmarking information in Service Planning.</li> <li>4) Ensure the effective operation of partnerships to deliver agreed outcome and the methodology used to assess outcomes and effectiveness.</li> <li>5) Empower and develop staff to maximise their potential to achieve for the Place and the Authority through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreeing organisational capabilities and design principles and putting in place an organisation structure</li> <li>• Developing and implementing a workforce plan;</li> <li>• Developing and implementing an organisational development programme.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<p><b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular reviews of activities, outputs and planned outcomes;</li> <li>• Member Scrutiny Process and scrutiny reports;</li> <li>• Programme of Value for money reviews;</li> <li>• Internal Audit Programme;</li> <li>• Evidence of performance data and trend analysis informing decision making;</li> <li>• Evidence of research data and benchmarking information being used to inform service planning;</li> <li>• Monitoring of effective operation of partnerships to deliver agreed outcome and the methodology used to assess outcomes and effectiveness;</li> <li>• Reports from the National Park Management Plan Delivery Group;</li> <li>• Authority Members appointed to Outside Bodies;</li> <li>• Learning and Development Policy for Staff;</li> <li>• Investors in People Delivery Group in conjunction with Staff Survey results identify corporate learning needs;</li> <li>• Staff annual learning and development and induction programmes;</li> <li>• Individual staff learning and development opportunities;</li> <li>• Retainment of Investors in People Accreditation.</li> </ul>

## **Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness**

- The Tool Kit for the Disposal of Assets was amended in 2020 following a scrutiny review by Members.
- A new Asset Management plan 2025 – 2030 is to be adopted by Q2 2025
- The responses from the Investors in People online questionnaire were analysed with an Investors in People Delivery Group set up to develop and agree an action plan. Performance against the action plan is being monitored.
- The Investors in People Delivery group identified three priority areas and created sub working groups to deliver agreed actions. The areas are 1. Communicating our values group 2. Building recognition and reward awareness, and 3. Enhancing equality, diversity and inclusion in our workplace.
- After achieving IIP Silver level of 'We invest in Wellbeing' award, the Wellbeing agenda and action plan has been incorporated into the Health and Safety Committee which meets quarterly.
- Major organisational changes proposed by Chief Executive in February 2023 were implemented during the period October to December 2023.
- Further organisational changes proposed by Chief Executive in January 2025 and expected to be implemented by end of June 2025.

## **Sub Principle: E (2) Developing the capability of the Authority's leadership and other individuals – We Will:**

- 6) Develop the capability of the membership through:
  - Ensuring our committee structure and decision making processes are efficient and effective with the different roles of Member and Officers being clear and understood;
  - Having in place appropriate systems and guidance to support such structures and ensure effective communication between Members and staff in their respective roles;
  - Ensure role descriptions for Members, Chairs and Special Responsibility Roles are clearly understood;
  - Having structures in place which enable Members to utilise their skills and experience including through scrutiny to help achieve outcomes;
  - Conduct a survey of Members every two years and respond to feedback if required.
- 7) Agree the extent of delegation from Members to Officers and periodically review the effectiveness of this.
- 8) Appoint appropriately qualified and experienced people to the three statutory roles of:
  - Head of Paid Service
  - Chief Finance Officer
  - Monitoring Officerand put in place appropriate Protocols and Policies to support these roles including in the Chair's job description a responsibility for appraisal of the Chief Executive.
- 9) Ensure we have an effective Management Team in place with appropriate skills and experience, working coherently to achieve high levels of confidence in the NPA internally and externally.
- 10) Identify training and development needs of Members through the introduction of Member personal development plans and meet these needs through an annual programme and through development tailored to the needs of individuals.
- 11) Identify learning and development needs for Officers at an individual, service and corporate levels providing ways of meeting these through a variety of means as described in our Learning and Development Policy.
- 12) Use our skills and experience matrix for different Member Roles and the Member Development Plan process to help Members self-assess and develop appropriate skills to carry out their work.
- 13) Implement the appraisal process for Secretary of State Members.

- 14) Use our appraisal process to appraise the performance of individual staff and maximise the contribution of staff through individual objectives and development plans.
- 15) Ensure a suitable set of employment policies and practices are in place to support staff as our most valued asset.

### **What evidence/assurance is in place?**

- Job descriptions for Chief Executive, Authority Chair and Members;
- Regular meetings with Chief Executive, Chair and Deputy Chair;
- Regular meetings with Chief Executive, all Chairs and Deputy/Vice Chairs;
- Chief Executive's appraisal process led by Chair of Authority;
- Scheme of delegation reviewed at least annually in light of legal and organisational changes;
- Standing orders and financial regulations are reviewed on a regular basis;
- Clear statement of respective roles and responsibilities and how they will be put into practice;
- Management Development Programme;
- Member Training and Development Framework including annual Member Training and Development

### **Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness**

- Continued to provide a training and development programme for Members. The Member participation rate for essential training/briefing events for 2023/24 was 66% and for participation in formal meetings was 76%. During 2023/24, 23% of Members had personal development plans and 37% completed a self-assessment.
- As Defra and other appointing Authorities regularly request information on the attendance levels of their appointees the Authority has previously agreed to publish attendance figures annually based upon the financial year (1 April to 31 March) the target is 75%. The figures are reported annually to the Annual Meeting in July. In 2019/20 the overall attendance level was 72.4%, with 85% in 2020/21, 64% in 2021/22, 74% in 2022/23. In 2023/24 figure was 76% and this was reported to the Authority on 5 July 2024.
- The Authority has established a Panel to oversee the process for making appointments in key positions at the Annual Meeting each year. This was reviewed by the Governance Working Group in May 2020 and the conclusion was that the Appointment Process Panel did make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the Annual Meeting and should therefore continue.
- Continued to assist the Chair in carrying out appraisals for Secretary of State Members and submitting business cases to Defra for the reappointment of exiting Secretary of State Members at the end of their term of office.
- During 2024, following resignations, 2 new Local Authority Members were appointed to the Authority,
- In 2024 there were no changes to Parish Member appointments with the next elections and changes to appointments expected in 2027.
- There was 1 Secretary of State Member appointed by Defra to an existing vacancy in early 2024/25. However, another Secretary of State Member resigned in June 2024, so a vacancy is still being carried until July 2025.
- All new Members appointed in 2024 went through an induction process.
- All planning applications which are not directly connected with, or necessary for, the conservation management of a habitat site, require consideration of whether the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on that site (typically referred to as the 'Habitats Regulations Assessment screening'). The Authority has amended the scheme of delegation so the decision on whether an assessment is needed and carrying out the assessment is delegated to officers.
- The Training Academy launched in early 2024 as a two-year pilot to test a new approach to

<p>workforce development, with initial funding for two posts in year one and four in year two. Despite the withdrawal of second-year funding due to wider financial constraints, the pilot has already demonstrated success, with several new roles established and more planned. Since launch, the Academy has supported 5 traineeships, 7 apprenticeships, and 1 student placement. Early results are encouraging, with at least five more posts in development and continued growth anticipated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Member skills audit was commenced in August 2024.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(F) Core Principle - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.</b></p>
<p><b>Sub Principle: F (1) Managing Risk – We Will:</b></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Implement our Risk Management Policy and Strategy throughout all levels of the Authority and regularly review its effectiveness including through regular reviews and scrutiny by Internal Audit.</li> <li>2) Implement robust and integrated risk management arrangements and make sure that they are working effectively.</li> <li>3) Making sure that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated.</li> </ol>
<p><b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk Management Policy and Strategy;</li> <li>• Corporate Risk Register and monitoring;</li> <li>• Service Plan – Risk Register and monitoring;</li> <li>• Risk based Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan;</li> <li>• Information Technology Disaster Recovery Plan;</li> <li>• Business Continuity Plan including Crisis Management Procedures;</li> <li>• Health and Safety Policy, support and annual report to Management Team and Programmes and Resources Committee</li> <li>• Insurance Policies;</li> <li>• Building security systems.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During 2024/25 Members reviewed the 2023/24 year end position for the Corporate Risk Register and approved the proposed Corporate Risk Register for the year 2024/2025.</li> <li>• The Corporate Risk Register for 2024/25 was developed by the Management Team by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Reviewing the 2023/24 corporate risk register year end position;</li> <li>➢ Considering risks that might prevent the achievement of the corporate strategy;</li> <li>➢ Considering risks in service plans that need to be escalated and monitored at a corporate level;</li> <li>➢ Considering the external environment that we operate in.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Programme and Resources Committee received a report providing evidence that health and safety performance was satisfactory and continuously improving. The report included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ An overall appraisal of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) performance for the PDNPA for the previous year with particular reference to corporate initiatives, making further significant improvements and to performance indicators;</li> <li>➢ Accident and incident data and analysis for the year 2023/24 for staff and visitors including near-miss reporting;</li> <li>➢ A report on OSH services provided to other National Parks;</li> <li>➢ Recommended priorities and actions for 2024/25 and beyond.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Programmes and Resources Committee review the Occupational Safety and Health</li> </ul>

<p>Policy annually.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Authority recognises the need to have appropriate insurance cover in place for the Authority's operations, arising from statutory requirements and for risk management purposes.</li> <li>• The Authority has given Officers the authority needed and insurance contracts have been let for the 2025-30 period (Minute No 31/24).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sub Principle: F (2) Managing Performance – We Will:</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4) Implement a robust Performance Management Framework with quarterly and annual monitoring and reporting to Managers and Members.</li> <li>5) Ensure our decision-making processes are sound through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evidenced based reports following a prescribed format to ensure relevant information and risks are included;</li> <li>• expert advice being available to report authors and to Managers and Members at decision making meetings;</li> <li>• committee and meeting processes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>6) Implement our scrutiny process and monitor its success as an effective challenge and performance improvement tool.</li> <li>7) Monitor and review activities and report on progress made.</li> <li>8) Ensure our Financial Regulations, Standing Orders and Budget Monitoring support reporting of financial performance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Performance and Business Plan includes performance against targets;</li> <li>• Using research data and benchmarking information in Service Planning;</li> <li>• Bi-annual Performance Reports to Authority Meetings from 2020, previously reported quarterly;</li> <li>• Bi-annual Performance Review meetings involving Managers from 2020, previously held quarterly;</li> <li>• Employee performance against objectives is formally reviewed during the Enjoy conversation once a year in Q1 as part of the Performance Management (appraisal) process;</li> <li>• Annual Planning Policy Review – provides analysis on how planning policies are working;</li> <li>• Ongoing discussion between Members and Officers on the information needs of members to support decision making and questions in biennial Member Survey;</li> <li>• Publication of agendas and minutes of meetings;</li> <li>• Report templates include heading to make sure that risks and other implications are considered;</li> <li>• Agreement on the information that will be needed and timescales;</li> <li>• Although not required to have Scrutiny Committees we have a tried and tested framework for Member involvement in scrutiny;</li> <li>• Evidence of improvements arising from Member Scrutiny;</li> <li>• Value for money reviews to Programmes and Resources Committee;</li> <li>• Member motions to full Authority allow Members to raise and discuss areas of concern;</li> <li>• Every year the annual Member Learning and Development programme includes workshops relating to Strategic Business and Financial Planning;</li> <li>• Record of decision making and supporting materials;</li> <li>• Our Standing Orders include Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations;</li> <li>• During 2024 the Budget Monitoring Group was replaced by the Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring Group. This still involves Members and meets 4 times per year to discuss financial arrangements and assess the effectiveness of the control measures in place.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to</b></p>

<b>effectiveness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During 2018/19 Members of the Audit Resources and Performance Committee continued to receive and discuss quarterly performance reports including a review of performance against the Corporate Plan); monitoring of the corporate risk register; monitoring of Freedom of Information Requests and monitoring of complaints. Since the 2019 Annual Meeting these reports have been considered at meetings of the Authority and from 2020 the reports have been bi-annual.</li> <li>Approved the performance review element of the Performance and Business Plan.</li> <li>The budget monitoring meeting involving Authority Members continued to meet up to May 2024 when it was replaced by the Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring Group which meets 4 times per year.</li> <li>In the 2022/23 Members' Survey 65% (15) respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had "appropriate performance data so that I know how well the Authority is delivering against its approved policies and plans". 26% (6) neither agreed nor disagreed, 4% (1) disagreed and 4% (1) did not know.</li> </ul>
<b>Sub Principle: F (3) Robust Internal Controls – We Will:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9) Ensure there is a system of internal control in place which is reviewed in light of experience and feedback on its effectiveness from auditors and others.</li> <li>10) Evaluate and monitor risk management and internal control on a regular basis.</li> <li>11) Ensure our Confidential Reporting Policy ('whistle blowing' policy) and Anti- Fraud and Corruption Policy are clearly accessible on our website, intranet and to all Officers as part of the material given to staff during their induction.</li> <li>12) Ensure that effective Internal and External Auditors are appointed and that they have direct contact with the Authority Meeting.</li> <li>13) Ensure that the Authority Meeting is supported in its audit, scrutiny and standards roles.</li> </ul>
<b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk Management Policy and Strategy formally approved and adopted and is reviewed and updated on a regular basis;</li> <li>Risk Management Policy and Strategy;</li> <li>Risk based internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan;</li> <li>Audit reports and management actions reported to the Authority Meeting;</li> <li>Compliance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption;</li> <li>Confidential Reporting Policy in place and promoted;</li> <li>Audit reports and management actions reported to the Authority Meeting;</li> <li>Annual assurance and summary of activities reported to the Authority Meeting and included in Annual Governance Statement;</li> <li>The terms of reference for the Authority Meeting include Internal and External Audit matters and matters relating to the Authority's Corporate Governance Framework including the Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Governance Report;</li> <li>During 2024 the Budget Monitoring Group was replaced by the Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring Group. This still involves Members and meets 4 times per year to discuss financial arrangements and assess the effectiveness of the control measures in place.</li> </ul>
<b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Authority Meeting received the 2023/24 Internal Audit Annual Report in July 2024. The overall opinion of the Head of Internal Audit on the framework of governance, risk management and control operating in the Authority was that it provides Substantial Assurance. No reliance was placed on the work of other assurance bodies in reaching that opinion. There were also no significant control weaknesses which, in the opinion of the Head of Internal Audit, need to be considered for inclusion in the Annual Governance</li> </ul>

<p>Statement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the 6 areas reviewed in 2023/24 3 were given a substantial level of assurance and 3 were given a reasonable level of assurance.</li> <li>• The Authority Meeting in July 2024 approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25.</li> <li>• The Authority meeting received the Internal Audit Reports and recommendations and proposed management action to address the issues raised.</li> <li>• The Risk Management Policy and Strategy has been approved and adopted and is reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Risk is monitored quarterly by the Authority.</li> <li>• The Authority has a risk based Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan agreed by the Authority Meeting. Audit report findings and details of action taken in response are considered by the Authority with the Internal Auditor present to address any questions and/or concerns.</li> <li>• Both the Internal and External Auditors have direct access to Members.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sub Principle: F (4) Managing Data – We Will:</b></p>
<p>14) Implement our Information Management Strategy led by our designated Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) and supported by a network of Information Asset Owners.</p> <p>15) Develop and roll out our Data Protection charter which will include guidance on arrangements for sharing data.</p> <p>16) Ensure our data is accurate and clean through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The measures outlined in the information management strategy;</li> <li>• The performance management processes</li> </ul>
<p><b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme and disclosure log;</li> <li>• Appointment of Senior Information Risk Owner, Lead Information Asset Owner and departmental Information Asset Owners;</li> <li>• Guidance available to Officers and Members on data protection issues;</li> <li>• Creation of data protection policies, data protection staff training plan and rollout with appropriate tools and monitoring, robust processes where personal/sensitive data are created or used as part of wider operations;</li> <li>• Use of robust data processor agreements where third parties hold or process personal/sensitive data on the Authority's behalf;</li> <li>• Data Protection Statement;</li> <li>• Quality and accuracy of data considered in preparing quarterly performance reports, moved to bi-annual reporting from 2020;</li> <li>• Growth of datasets/types published online.</li> <li>• On-line Data Protection training rolled out to Members in 2022.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In accordance with the recommendation in the Freedom of Information Act the Authority maintains and publishes a disclosure log which contains information relating to requests that we have received and responded to within the quarter. The log is in summary format which provides details of the request, whether we have disclosed the information and whether we have responded within the time period defined by the Information Commissioner's Office.</li> <li>• On-going measures to improve data capture and data quality will continue in order to properly assess the direction of travel for the performance of planning policy and planning decisions over the coming years</li> <li>• In accordance with the Information Management Strategy (IMS2) we continued with our action to 'clean' data as it is the key to being able to improve the quality of our data and make it more accessible from one single source to officers and the public.</li> <li>• Collected survey data to inform performance assessments and design of services in a number of areas including: planning, cycle hire, visitor centres, guided walks, volunteers and</li> </ul>



<p>residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Authority has a number of privacy statements in place and published on the Authority website.</li> <li>• Continued implementation of the 'Infrastructure as a Service' (IaaS) model as part of a refresh of the core IT Infrastructure funded through the ICT capital programme. This approach allows the Authority to renew its infrastructure while increasing its capability, reducing risks of failure and increasing security, backup and disaster recovery provisions.</li> <li>• Data Protection/Information Security training regularly provided for Members.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sub Principle: F (5) Strong public financial management – We Will:</b></p>
<p>17) Put in place a Medium Term Financial Forecast supported by an annual review and budget setting process aligned to the corporate strategy. The MTFF is a live document and will be presented regularly to the Senior Management Team, as material changes arise.</p> <p>18) Ensure our financial management includes forward planning of expenditure and resources, budget consultation, budget setting and monitoring and final accounts. The aim is to ensure that these are accurate, include information relevant to the user and are completed to agreed timescales. Financial Regulations further support the above by setting our policies and procedures that are to be adhered to.</p> <p>19) Ensure the Chief Finance Officer has independent reporting as necessary to the Chief Executive, Resource Management Meeting and Members.</p>
<p><b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Management Arrangements and reporting;</li> <li>• Budget monitoring reports;</li> <li>• Budget Monitoring meetings up to May 2024, involving Members, Audit, Budget and Project Risk Monitoring meetings since May 2024 also involving Members.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Received an unqualified External Audit Opinion for 2023/24 for the final accounts and a satisfactory conclusion on value for money.</li> <li>• Members approved the Treasury Management Policy Statement and Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy at the Authority meeting in March 2025.</li> <li>• The Authority considered the outturn for 2023/24 in July 2024 and approved the necessary appropriations to or from reserves and agreed unspent funds and overspends to be carried forward into the 2024/25 financial year.</li> <li>• Developed Budget Proposals for 2024/25. The Government set a three-year spending review for 2022/23 to 2024/25 and based on these proposals we agreed and implemented a balanced budget for 2024/25. The Defra funding for 2024/25 remained static at £6,698.847k, with a supplementary grant of £500k, being split equally towards Capital and Revenue expenditure.</li> <li>• Defra have confirmed that our baseline funding for 2025/26 as £6,269,338 .</li> <li>• The budget monitoring group met at Q2, Q3 and Outturn to review the budget. The Medium Term Financial Plan for 2024/25 to 2027/28 was presented to Members as part of the 2024/25 budget. This was set on the basis that the NPG for 2024/25 would be as based on the NPG agreement set in March 2021 which had given indicative values for 2023/24 and 2024/25, any changes to this would be reported back to Members as soon as practicable.</li> <li>• The National Park Authority continues to work at a national level on behalf of the English National Park Authorities to influence further improvements to existing and future Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes (Capital Works Grant, Sustainable Farm Incentive (SFI), Countryside Stewardship Mid-tier, Higher-tier and Landscape Recovery). Uncertainty and complexity continue about the future of farming and land management as the full details of and particularly payment levels for ELM are not yet known. This situation has been exacerbated during 2024/25 with delays and limited opportunities for Higher-tier, delays in increased Higher Level scheme agreement payment rates, the reduction in inheritance tax agricultural property relief, the increased pace of Basic Payment Scheme</li> </ul>

<p>payment reductions, the closure of the Capital Grants Scheme for new applications due to the budget being allocated and finally the suspension of the SFI with no notice. Whilst, refined versions of the Capital Grant Scheme and SFI are due in later in 2025/26 these events have impacted on farmer and land manager confidence in the direction of travel for greater delivery of nature recovery and to address climate change. We have worked directly with Defra in testing and trialling the new Environmental Land Management approach, and through National Parks England have set out our vision for the future of farming in protected landscapes and have established a Nature Recovery lead and building on the ELM Test and Trial are developing the Authority's approach and future role in Biodiversity Net Gain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 2017/18 AGS identified risk around a failure to influence the transposing of EU laws and legislation for landscape and the environment into UK law after Article 50 remained until 2021. Progress has been made with for example hedgerow protection however, concerns remain particularly for dry stone wall protection now that cross compliance has ended.</li> <li>• The area of land within the National Park in an agri-environment scheme land management option remained a concern, but it was recognised that this was not within the Authority's control. The Authority has continued to work with other English National Parks (through NPE) increasingly with other Protected Landscape organisations and with DEFRA to continue to influence the design of future Environmental Land Management (ELM) approach. The learnings from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and the ELM Test and Trial continue to be shared with various Defra teams to help inform successful design and delivery of ELM in Protected Landscapes and future farm advice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>(G) Core Principle - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit, to deliver effective accountability.</b></p>
<p><b>Sub Principle: G (1) Implementing good practice in transparency – We Will:</b></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Increase accessibility to information and to engaging with the Authority through a variety of ways and access channels including through improvements to digital communications.</li> <li>2) Hold all meetings in public unless there are good reasons for confidentiality and implement a public participation scheme for all committee.</li> </ol>
<p><b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key governance documents, including Standing Orders, are published on the Authority's website using modern.gov;</li> <li>• Publishing operational data through our website;</li> <li>• Documents relating to meetings of the Authority and its Committees are published on the Authority website;</li> <li>• Provisions in place allowing reporting on meetings and providing an audio-visual webcast of meetings of the Authority and its Committees;</li> <li>• Publish work programmes for the Authority and its Committees;</li> <li>• Committee reports containing exempt information are kept to a minimum and where possible an open report is provided to summarise the decision to be made and allow public participation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key governance documents, such as Standing Orders are published on the Authority website and available through the modern.gov app.</li> <li>• Continued to publish documents relating to meetings of the Authority and its Committees on the website. In addition, members of the public can use self-service functionality to register to receive automated email alerts for specific topics or meetings. Documents are also published through the modern.gov app available for IOS, Android, Blackberry, Kindle Fire and Windows users.</li> <li>• Webcasting of meetings of the Authority and its Committees continues with recordings being held and published for 3 years after the meeting.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although we are not required by law to publish a forward plan of decisions, in the spirit of openness and transparency we continue to compile and publish work programmes for the Authority and its Committees to allow members of the public to be aware of forthcoming decisions.</li> </ul>
<b>Sub Principle: G (2) Implementing good practice in reporting – We Will:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare, approve and publish annual performance monitoring reports for our: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Park Management Plan</li> <li>Performance and Business Plan</li> <li>Local Plan</li> </ul> </li> <li>Prepare and publish an Annual Governance Statement which assesses performance against our Code of Corporate Governance and identifies actions for continuous improvement.</li> <li>Ensure our Monitoring Officer has independent reporting as necessary to the Chief Executive, Management Team and Members. Following the re-structure in 2023 the Authority Solicitor is also the Monitoring Officer.</li> <li>Prepare and publish our annual financial statements in accordance with guidance and good practice.</li> </ol>
<b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authority approval of year end performance reports and annual accounts;</li> <li>Prepare and publish Annual Governance Statement and financial statements in accordance with guidance and best practice;</li> <li>Monitoring Officer Protocol.</li> </ul>
<b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members reviewed and approved the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 in February 2025.</li> <li>Final progress report on National Park Management Plan 2018-23 to the Authority in April 2023</li> <li>Year-end performance report, 2023/24 Performance and Business Plan and 2024/25 Corporate Risk Register reported to the Authority in May 2024.</li> <li>Revised Risk Management Policy approved by the Authority in November 2023.</li> <li>Decile 1 Progress Report of the Authority Plan reported to the Authority in November 2023, Decile 2 reported in May 2024. Decile 3 was reported to the November 2024 Authority, and Decile 4 will be reported in May 2025.</li> <li>Authority Plan 2023-28 Update and Year 3 Look Forward (2025/26 Decile 5 &amp; 6) reported to the Authority in March 2025.</li> </ul>
<b>Sub Principle: G (3) Assurance and effective accountability – We Will:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proactively work with Internal and External Auditors to ensure the good governance of the Authority through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular liaison meetings;</li> <li>Forward audit plans based on risk;</li> <li>Responding to all recommendations in a timely way.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Ensure the Internal and External Auditors have direct and unrestricted access to Senior Officers and Members.</li> <li>Consider and respond to assurances sought and received on our performance including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External audit letter;</li> <li>Internal audit reports;</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from those charged with governance including Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer, Chief Executive and Chair of the Authority;</li> <li>• Local Government &amp; Social Care Ombudsman;</li> <li>• Planning appeals and inspector reports;</li> <li>• Complaints and Freedom of Information/ Environmental Information Regulations enquires;</li> <li>• Investors in People assessors;</li> <li>• Legal proceedings;</li> <li>• National Park peer reviews;</li> <li>• Self-assessment processes e.g. against CIPFA's code of practice on managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption.</li> </ul> <p>10) Ensure our risk management policy processes are applied to partnerships and delivery service level agreements.</p>
<p><b>What evidence/assurance is in place?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of positive improvement;</li> <li>• Compliance with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit;</li> <li>• Compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards;</li> <li>• Evidence in Annual Governance Statement;</li> <li>• Community Strategy;</li> <li>• People and Park connected strategy and action plan;</li> <li>• Audit Plans agreed by Members at Authority Meetings;</li> <li>• Assurances included in the Annual Governance Statement.</li> <li>• Self-Assessment against the CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review of action and assurances indicating maintenance/improvement to effectiveness</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Authority received and noted the Local Government &amp; Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Annual Review letter for 2023/24.</li> <li>• Members considered the 2023/24 Annual External Audit Report in February 2025 which gave:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ An unqualified conclusion on the Authority's arrangements to secure value for money.</li> <li>➢ An unqualified opinion on the financial statements. This means that they believe the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority and its expenditure and income for the year.</li> <li>➢ The Statement of Accounts was prepared in a timely manner with high quality supporting work papers.</li> <li>➢ The External Auditor had reviewed the Annual Governance Statement and concluded that there are no matters to report and that it was consistent with their understanding.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The 2023/24 External Audit Strategy Memorandum from our External Auditors, Mazars was reported to Members in July 2024.</li> <li>• Received a report summarising the work carried out on planning appeals from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. In 2024/25 51 new planning appeals were received of which 20 were still in hand. 31 appeals had been determined, of these 35% (11) were allowed and 65% (20) were dismissed. The percentage of appeals dismissed has remained the same as the previous year (65%) but it should be noted that on such low numbers currently one appeal decision can change the percentages by 2.5%.</li> </ul>