

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

VOLUNTEERING

PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

	Critical	Significant	Moderate	Opportunity
Findings	0	0	0	0
Overall audit opinion	Substantial assurance			

Status: Final

Date Issued: 14 May 2025

Responsible Officer: Finance Manager

INTRODUCTION

The Peak District National Park Authority relies on volunteers to support its conservation, visitor engagement and community initiatives. According to the authority's Volunteer development plan 2024-2028 there were 1641 registered volunteers who had contributed a total of fifty-three thousand hours to maintaining the park, biodiversity projects, guided walks and educational outreach work alongside core staff. Volunteers play a vital role in protecting the park's natural heritage while enhancing visitor experiences, which wouldn't be possible with core funded services alone.

To strengthen volunteer management and retention, the authority has introduced a new volunteering development plan covering 2024-2028 and has restructured some elements of its volunteer management. The plan outlines a seven-step process to reviewing and improving current practice and a future vision of what the service will look like, including having a one team model and making better use of its BetterImpact volunteer management software.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The purpose of this audit was to provide assurance to management that procedures and controls within the system ensure that:

- ▲ Policies, risk management and systems adequately support volunteer engagement, retention and compliance with governance requirements.
- ▲ The volunteer programme is effectively managed, with clear processes for recruitment, training and resource allocation.
- ▲ Financial and administrative procedures, including expense reimbursement and budget management, are efficient and well managed.

This audit included review the volunteer cycle from recruitment to retention, and the policies and systems used to manage the resource.

KEY FINDINGS

There is a robust and accessible framework of volunteer policies and guidance, that is easily available to all volunteers. The BetterImpact volunteering system and MyImpact mobile app requires confirmation from volunteers they have read, and accepted mandatory policies and prevents access to the system if not accepted. The BetterImpact system provides good management information and is used extensively for the management of volunteering. Admin rights are appropriately limited. Risk assessments are available for all volunteering activities and are used alongside the Health and Safety Policy. Volunteer records, including personal details, training and qualifications are effectively managed through the BetterImpact system and the MyImpact mobile app, which also support communication, activity details and role booking, including access control based on current training.

Volunteer experience is enhanced through centralised management, allowing for better oversight of numbers, training status and resources planning. Volunteer satisfaction is supported through social media updates and thank you emails following completion of an activity. Feedback is collected via an annual satisfaction survey, which is reportedly well used. The absence of a formal record of exit survey records means potential insights into improvements may be missed.

Volunteering opportunities are well promoted across various platforms with a clear and consistent message. The sign-up process is straightforward through a single route via the software. Applications are processed promptly, and volunteers only need to register once and can see all activities. While the process is efficient, reliance on digital access may exclude individuals without internet or computer skills. New volunteers receive thorough induction resources and can trial shifts alongside experience team members. Training is tailored to roles and well managed.

The expense claim process is being streamlined with monthly payments replacing the previous quarterly cycle, reducing delays. Central checks and approval ensure accuracy and improve efficiency. However, new arrangements that have increased eligibility and required estimates of claim volumes means there is some uncertainty in the budget for this year. Some contingency exists but if claims exceed expectations, potential actions include pausing activities or expense reimbursements, though the latter may conflict with Volunteer Bureau requirements and affect recruitment strategies.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited. Our overall opinion of the controls within the system at the time of the audit was that they provided Substantial Assurance.

Audit opinions

Audit work is based on sampling transactions to test the operation of systems. It cannot guarantee the elimination of fraud or error. Our opinion is based on the risks we identify at the time of the audit. Our overall audit opinion is based on four grades of opinion, as set out below.

Opinion	Assessment of internal control
Substantial assurance	A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Reasonable assurance	There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Limited assurance	Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
No assurance	Immediate action is required to address fundamental gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
Finding ratings	
Critical	A fundamental system weakness, which presents unacceptable risk to the system objectives and requires urgent attention by management.
Significant	A significant system weakness, whose impact or frequency presents risks to the system objectives, which needs to be addressed by management.
Moderate	The system objectives are not exposed to significant risk, but the issue merits attention by management.
Opportunity	There is an opportunity for improvement in efficiency or outcomes but the system objectives are not exposed to risk.

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