North York Moors National Park Authority
Finance, Risk, Audit and Standards Committee

24 November 2014

Leadership Development Programme

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To inform Members of the outcomes of the Leadership Development Programme.

2. Background

2.1 As Members will be aware, the last four years have seen unprecedented change to the Authority's finances and, as a consequence, staffing structures. This has involved voluntary and compulsory redundancy programmes, the merging of two departments and restructuring within the others. This process, while necessary, has caused considerable uncertainty but all major changes have now been completed or programmed.

2.2 The reduction in financial and staffing resources together with the desire to continue to deliver as many services as possible led Officers to consider how to approach 'getting more from less'. One of the conclusions of this thinking was that a programme aimed at improving the way leaders worked was a key starting point. For these purposes 'leader' was defined as a line manager or a member of staff whose expertise meant that they led the Authority's work in a particular area.

3. The Programme

3.1 The Leadership Development Programme has been run by a company based in East Yorkshire called The Beech Consultancy. They were selected following a competitive process which balanced the cost and quality elements. The programme has been designed to change the way in which teams are led and improve interactions (and therefore performance) both inside and outside the Authority. The programme's aims were to;

- ensure that all those in a 'leadership' position understood themselves and those they work with better;
- develop teams capable of adapting and thriving in periods of change;
- involve team members in developing solutions to critical issues;
- give leaders stronger skills at engaging with staff at all levels to improve their contribution to the Authority; and
- recognise potential in staff and develop it for the future.

3.2 Although the programme length has varied for different groups of managers, it has incorporated the same key elements, including;

- **Self-Leadership** – greater confidence in decision making;
- **Thought leadership** – increasing the capacity to understand their role within systems. Develop knowledge how they and others can work together as effectively as possible;

- **People leadership** – increasing abilities to engage with staff to maximise their contribution. Developing coaching skills.

3.3 The Programme operated in three distinct phases; firstly, ten Managers including the Chief Executive and Directors worked on a more detailed programme called 'Ready to Lead'; secondly, a further 35 managers were involved in a slightly shorter programme called 'Changing the Conversation'; and thirdly, the programme was so well received that a one day course covering the key aspects was rolled out to the rest of the staff. The whole programme commenced in September 2012, finishing in March 2014. The programme has been paid for from the established training budgets with the cost being spread across two financial years.

4. **Formal Evaluation of the Leadership Development Programme**

4.1 While there is considerable anecdotal evidence that the Leadership Programme has been beneficial, Officers determined that there should be some formal evaluation and consideration given to the lasting outcomes of the Programme.

4.2 Data was gathered at regular intervals during the programme from participants. This information helped to shape the development of the Programme. The comments made, with the very occasional exception, were uniformly positive about the programme and the way in which it was delivered.

4.3 From the outset, Officers had decided that conducting a staff questionnaire prior to the programme and doing the same again at the end of the programme would provide evidence of whether there had been a positive beneficial effect.

4.4 The questionnaire was very similar to that which the Authority had used previously in 2005 and 2009. It was agreed in advance which questions related specifically to the themes covered in the programme. The summary of the outcome from both the 2012 and 2014 questionnaires is contained in **Appendix 1**. While the questionnaire was devised in-house, the completed documents were sent directly to The Beech Consultancy to ensure complete anonymity for the respondents. This means that there can be a high degree of certainty that the outcomes are realistic and accurately reflect the views of staff.

4.5 In some ways, it was surprising that the 2014 outcome generally showed higher scores than the pre-programme questionnaire in 2012. The questionnaire this year was conducted in April at a time when it was very clear to all staff that there would be further reductions in the Authority's core grant and the effect that this would have on staff numbers.

4.6 As part of the evaluation, it was agreed with The Beech Consultancy that nine questions in particular would provide data related to specific outcomes that the leadership Programme was intended to deliver (see **Appendix 1**).

4.7 More specifically, eight of the nine questions that were identified as being particularly relevant in terms of evaluation, showed improvements, some of them very significant ones, when compared to 2012. The only area that showed a decrease was in relation to managers giving a clear and consistent picture of the Authority's direction. This was certainly caused, in part, by the uncertainty regarding which services were likely to see the most significant changes as a result of budget cuts.

4.8 The results from the other eight questions certainly provide evidence of strong improvements in collaborative working, providing opportunities for the development of

ideas, line managers' skills and in the encouragement given to find better ways of doing things.

4.9 While the statistical data is valuable, Officers also wanted to see a number of tangible differences made within the Authority. Officers have a wide range of on-going actions to carry out as a result of the programme. These range from simple operational matters to several more strategic issues. A number of key developments are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

5. **Future Appraisal Scheme**

5.1 The Authority's appraisal scheme is currently being rewritten. The outline principles for the new scheme have been developed in conjunction with staff (and have previously been approved by Members)and lean heavily on a number of the outcomes of the Leadership Programme, including placing greater trust in line managers, giving staff greater freedom to manage their own development, the value of open and honest feedback, integrating our work very obviously with our Values and so on. The principles for the new appraisal scheme are as follows;

- all staff are responsible for ensuring that one appraisal per year is completed – their own;
- the competency guide will be re-written to recognise significant difference between groups of staff, but **all** staff will have their performance judged against a set of core competencies which reflect our Values;
- the competency guide will become central to the appraisal discussion rather than an optional add-on;
- there will continue to be a link between performance and pay with individual performance being rated by their line manager as part of the appraisal discussion;
- the Directors' moderation meeting at the end of the process will not continue and line managers will be responsible for discussing performance and justifying their judgement. It is felt, however, that a meeting of Directors at the start of the appraisal process to share observations about overall performance would be helpful in ensuring that the scheme is applied consistently.
- paperwork and form filling will continue to be kept to a minimum;
- appraisal discussions should be the culmination of on-going discussions throughout the year;
- feedback between staff and their managers should be two way, open and honest;
- opportunities for 360 degree feedback will form part of the new scheme;
- while the scheme will be about individual performance, a greater emphasis will be put on the performance of teams;

6. **Establishment of a Group of Trained Coaches**

6.1 Officers have recognised the value of coaching within an organisation for some time, and moving towards the establishment of a coaching culture, as part of improving leadership skills generally, was one of the Programme's desired outcomes.

6.2 As part of the programme, ten senior managers were able to use the services of an external coach. All reported that they found these sessions to be very useful and re-inforced the need to develop coaching skills as part of a managers' skill set.

6.2 All managers who took part in the LDP have had the opportunity to develop their coaching skills and consider its use as a style of managing others in their teams to encourage them to find their own solutions to work issues. Six managers have further developed their coaching skills to establish a core of staff who have the skills to use coaching techniques in a variety of situations with other staff.

6.3 Formal coaching has been offered more widely to staff and a small number have taken advantage of one to one sessions. Officers do think that this is an area worth continuing to spend some time on and a number of follow up actions are planned.

6.4 A coaching style culture definitely exists amongst a wider number of managers and occurs in discussion, meetings and project development. Managers and staff can give numerous examples of where a managers' coaching skill have helped staff to develop their thoughts and ideas with the confidence to implement them.

6.5 Many managers and staff are good listeners with a high degree of respect for each other and their opinions. They encourage free discussion with open listening aimed at mutual development of ideas and solutions leading to good results and ownership of the outcomes. Those staff who have had some coaching training say they practice this style consciously but informally, without others necessarily being aware that coaching is taking place.

7. **Understanding of Working Preferences**

7.1 As part of the programme, Officers have used a variety of diagnostic tools to help them to understand better how they (and colleagues) prefer to work. This has included a 360 degree questionnaire to enable managers to have a greater understanding of what they and they colleagues and team members think are their strengths and weaknesses.

7.2 One of the tools used looks in particular at the preferences people have when working as part of a team – there is no right or wrong answer to this as the model recognises that the strongest teams include people with a variety of roles. The staff who have been through the programme are very strong at all of the 'doing' roles in the team such as implementers, team workers, completer finishers and monitor evaluators. In some ways, this should not be a surprise as the Authority is a small organisation which has functioned effectively because we employ people with a strong focus on tasks and getting the job done.

7.3 It does highlight, however, that relatively few members of staff are naturally good at publicising what we do, being very outgoing, looking for new and unorthodox ways of doing things and so on. This has been recognised and part of the remit of the Promotion and Tourism Officer role, introduced in 2012, is to address some of this. The appointment of a new External Funding Officer will also seek to bring in new skills. The potential establishment of a Trust would provide a way for people with very different working preferences, for example considerably more entrepreneurial, to bring their skills to bear for the benefit of the National Park.

8. **Establishment of a Culture where Ideas are Encouraged**

8.1 While there is a need for the Authority, where it is sensible to do so, to recruit staff whose natural working preferences would be more centred on income generation and entrepreneurial ideas, Officers are clear that existing staff will have considerable creative energy if given the opportunity.

8.2 Earlier in the year, staff were invited to a series of small group sessions where ideas regarding income generation were sought. Many of the ideas have been taken forward and regular feedback has been given to staff on progress.

8.3 When there was a possibility of the Authority acquiring the Flatts Lane and Guisborough Walkway sites, staff views and ideas on whether this was a desirable direction for the Authority to take were sought and debated openly. The outcome to this consultation was very positive. The project did not go ahead in the end, despite Member and full staff support, due to reasons completely outside the Authority's control.

8.4 As consideration was being given to how the Authority might balance its budgets for 2015/16 and beyond, staff were asked for their views on how savings could be made on terms and conditions of employment. There was considerable debate and discussion on this, but the consensus view from staff was that terms and conditions of employment were not generous and that the savings made would be minor and have a disproportionately negative effect on motivation. Directors listened and agreed with this point of view. As a result savings were sought elsewhere.

8.5 Discussion has just started on how the Authority can make best use of its properties with a view to reducing running costs. Staff have volunteered a wide range of ideas including desk sharing, more home working, off-site storage of data, greater density of use of office space, a more proactive approach to seeking tenants and so on.

8.6 Directors have had discussions with their teams about how the Leadership Programme learning can be used within their day to day work. A number of team leaders have been very proactive in organising a range of activities for their teams designed to consider the way in which they work and generate improvements in terms of cost or efficiency.

8.7 The Ideas Group has been invigorated and members of the group are being encouraged to follow up and develop their ideas without necessarily waiting for someone else to do it for them.

9. **Decision Making and Trust**

9.1 During the course of the Leadership Programme, there was a considerable amount of discussion about organisational structure and decision making channels. The general consensus was that staff felt ready and confident to be trusted to make a wider range of decisions without immediate reference to their managers.

9.2 One clear outcome of this was the establishment of a bi-monthly Management Team meeting to replace the Directors meetings. In this way, operational decisions will be discussed and dealt with at an operational level, leaving the agenda for Directors' meetings clearer to discuss more strategic issues.

9.3 The restructuring that has taken place this year has sought to ensure that greater trust is placed on staff who carry out day to day work. A number of managerial posts have been removed from the Authority's structures and, while workload does require management to ensure that expectations are realistic, the removal of 'management' has generally been seen to be beneficial to work flows and the level at which decisions are made.

10. **Conclusion**

10.1 Overall there is considerable evidence to suggest that the Leadership Development Programme has had and will continue to have a significant influence over the way in which the Authority works and how its staff are managed. Officers understand that a number of elements, particularly in relation to developing a more ideas driven culture and encouraging staff to take responsibility for decisions affecting their day to day work, will take time and will continue to need more senior managers to openly model the behaviour that they want others to follow.

11. **Sustainability Appraisal**

11.1 A Sustainability Assessment is not required because the report is an administrative issues report.

12. **Legal Implications**

12.1 There are no legal issues relating to the contents of this report.

13. **Recommendation**

13.1 That members note the contents of this report and offer their suggestions on developing any of the initiatives outlined.

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NYMNPA Staff Survey 2014 – Evaluation Analysis

Data related to Questionnaire responses (high-level)

- 50 people participated in the survey
- Scale structure for numerical interpretation of responses – 1-5, where 1 = 'Strongly Disagree', 5 = 'Strongly Agree'
- The survey statements are split into 10 themed areas, set out below with averages for 2014, compared to 2012

Theme (No. of Statements)	2014 Average	2012 Average	Change
The Authority (5)	4.04	4.08	**-0.04**
Leadership and Management (5)	3.84	3.80	**+0.04**
People Management and Development (6)	3.85	3.75	**+0.10**
Teamwork and Collaboration (3)	3.60	3.40	**+0.20**
Enterprise and Creativity (4)	3.80	3.50	**+0.30**
Decision Making and Planning (4)	3.70	3.55	**+0.15**
Processes and resources (3)	3.83	3.70	**+0.13**
Work-Life Balance and Job Satisfaction (5)	3.74	3.74	**=**
Reward, Recognition and Respect (5)	3.64	3.56	**+0.08**
Other (introduced 2012) (3)	4.07	3.77	**+0.30**

- Highest average score – Statement 4 (The Authority) 'I am proud to say that I work for the National Park (the 'place') = 4.5
- Lowest average score – Statement 38 (Reward, Recognition and Respect) 'I feel fairly paid for the work that I do for the Authority' = 3.1
- Compared to 2012 27 Statement averages have increased, 9 have stayed the same, 7 have decreased.

Data related to specific areas for Programme Evaluation

The table below sets results in respect of relevant statements identified for evaluation purposes and comparison against 2012:

No.	Statement	2014 Average	Increase / Decrease on 2012	% Agreeing with Statement	% Agreeing in 2012	% Increase / Decrease on 2012
7	Managers give a clear and consistent picture of the Authority's direction and priorities	3.4	=	55.1	62.0	-6.9
12	My line manager works with me to identify and agree work targets on a regular basis	3.9	+0.1	78.0	75.9	+2.1
15	My line manager gives me regular and constructive feedback that helps me to improve my performance	3.8	+0.2	76.0	60.8	+15.2
16	My line manager takes an active interest in my skills and personal development	4.0	+0.3	82.0	62.0	+20.0
18	In the authority there is an attitude that encourages collaborative working within and across teams	3.7	+0.3	68.0	49.4	+18.6
20	In the Authority there is an attitude that encourages me to come up with new and better ways of doing things	3.9	+0.3	75.5	69.6	+5.9
21	In the past 12 months I have had the opportunity to feed in ideas about how the Authority could improve the way in which it works	4.2	+0.6	89.8	69.6	+20.2
25	Sufficient effort is made to get the opinions and thinking of people who work for the Authority before decisions are made	3.5	+0.4	62.0	43.0	+19.0
34	I feel motivated in my present role	3.7	=	68.0	64.6	+3.4