

# North York Moors National Park Authority

25 March 2019

## Health and Safety

### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the progress made on the 2018/19 Health and Safety action plan and provide statistical data relating to health and accidents.
- 1.2 To seek approval for the 2019/20 Health and Safety Action Plan.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 Both Members and Officers are keen that health and safety continues to have a high priority and a revised systematic approach to formal reporting to Members was agreed in 2014.
- 2.2 The annual reporting approach is as follows;
  - the February meeting of FRASC is presented with a proposed action plan for the Authority's health and safety activity during the coming year;
  - at the other three quarterly FRASC meetings, Members are presented with a paper which gives an update on actions with regard to the action plan and also focuses in more detail on a particular health and safety topic;
  - progress against the action plan is then presented to the March National Park Authority meeting, thereby enabling all Members to have an input on an annual basis. This meeting is also provided with data regarding the number of accidents and near misses reported, as well as working days lost as a result of workplace accidents.

### 3. Accidents and Near Misses 2018/19

- 3.1 At the time of writing this report a total of 30 accidents to staff/volunteers have been reported since 1 April. No lost time has been recorded as a result and all accidents were minor in their nature, involving manual handling, slips, trips or minor cuts. 18 of the 30 accidents were minor injuries to volunteers which occurred while carrying out practical work tasks.
- 3.2 A further 25 accident reports have been received with regard to visitors to our sites. 20 of these relate to school children taking part in activities organised by the Education and Youth Engagement Team. The remaining 5 reports involve visitors to our car parks or visitor centres. All were minor in their nature and required no significant further action. These accident reports should be seen in the context of the large number of visitors to both centres, our car parks and the high number of young people we engage with.
- 3.3 It is worth noting that the corresponding figures for 2017/18 were lower overall with 22 accidents (9 involving volunteers) being reported plus 25 other reports regarding visitors.

3.4 During the same 1 April - date period, 26 near misses have also been reported. This is significantly higher than the same time last year (6 near misses reported). Officers' view is that the higher number of accident/near miss reports reflects increased activity in encouraging the report of such occurrences rather than a problem with deteriorating health and safety performance. A number of these near misses have resulted in valuable information about working practices or use of equipment being widely shared between colleagues.

#### 4. **Progress on the 2018/19 Health and Safety Action Plan**

4.1 The focus of work for the Health and Safety Group each year is the Health and Safety Action Plan approved by Members. Please see below for a summary of progress made to date;

Implement the action plan arising from Volunteer Health and Safety Survey;

*No serious issues were highlighted but the results and best practice were cascaded to all staff, plus feedback and actions to all volunteers via the volunteer newsletter Involved.*

- Investigate how well the revised Lone Working Policy is operating and make further recommendations to amend it if necessary;

*This has been incorporated into the SLA arrangement for the coming year and advice has been sought, received and acted upon in relation to lone working volunteers. Trials of three systems that potentially provide technical solutions for senior rangers working at weekends have been undertaken. One of these includes a system recently implemented by NYCC. Results will be fed back to Members in due course*

- Work with NYCC's Health and Wellbeing team to develop a follow up plan to build on and complement the work done on health promotion in 2017/18;

*The provision of the Health Assured range of information, advice and confidential counselling was bought for 2018/19. This will be extended for 2019/20 as well. The health information that it contains is actively promoted to staff through a variety of different means. Resilience training is planned for the first half of 2019/20 as is a repeat of the health check programme.*

- From a Health and Safety point of view, monitor the effectiveness of 'contracts' with associate volunteering groups;

*The original 'contract' for Associate Groups was put in place 3 years ago with the advice and agreement of the Authority's health and safety and insurance advisors.*

*Officers believed that it would be prudent to check that the agreements being used are appropriate as the increased engagement with Associate Groups is anticipated to be the main area of growth in volunteer numbers during the next 2 years.*

*Advice regarding the 'contract' has been received from the Authority's solicitor, external health and safety advisor and our insurers Zurich Municipal. As a result of the helpful advice given, a number of changes have been made along with a simple process that involves reviewing each contract on a six monthly basis (this is the responsibility of the Volunteer Officer). The Head of Corporate Services is responsible for 'authorising' each new or amended agreement.*

- Assess and develop health and safety knowledge in managers at and below Director level;

*Two Institute of Occupational Safety and Health Managing Safely courses have been run in June and October for a total of 20 managers to enable them to develop their health and safety management skills via a 4 day examined programme. The key areas that have been highlighted for corporate attention in relation to driver training, lifting and moving training and developing a register of compliance with relevant health and safety legislation. Officers intend working on these areas 2019/20 and they will form part of the Health and Safety action plan for the year.*

*The Chief Executive and Directors also took part in refresher training to remind them of their responsibilities and give the opportunity to reflect on and assess health and safety performance.*

- Revise the use of the SLA days to ensure that there is regular professional input into the Health and Safety Group;

*The main SLA contact has attended all of the H&S group meetings this year, is on site all day after these meetings and available to staff for any issues they wish to resolve. He has also advised on updates to the Education, practical and property related risk assessments and has also attended the training days provided for Volunteer Day Task Leaders.*

*The SLA has also provided specialist health and safety advice on a number of archaeological projects involving trenches and excavations.*

- Trial the use of 'mental health' first aiders.

*30 members of staff have been trained and reported back on their experience of the mental health first aid training programme. This was very positive and has been one of the most enthusiastically endorsed training programmes that the Authority has run. The availability of trained mental health first aiders (from each Department, work location and all levels in the organisation) has been publicised to staff.*

*This approach continues to complement the advice and availability of confidential professional counselling that is available via Health Assured.*

## 5. **Draft Health and Safety Action Plan 2019/20**

5.1 The draft action plan was discussed at FRASC in February. The suggested approach for 2019/20 is as follows;

- Developing a consistent approach to driver training with an accompanying policy;
- Ensuring that lifting and moving training is more appropriate and effective;
- Developing a formal register of relevant health and safety legislation and stating (briefly) how the Authority is complying with it;
- Organising appropriate health and safety refresher training for members;
- Consider updating the format used for risk assessments to make them more effective and more easily usable;
- Continue to focus on developing health and safety training for those who lead volunteers.

5.2 Members' views on these or any other items they feel should be included are very welcome.

## 6. **Sickness Absence**

- 6.1 As Members will be aware Officers were keen this year to continue with a range of actions in relation to health as well as concentrating efforts on safety issues. A number of activities have been completed and are outlined in Paragraph 4.1.
- 6.2 The Authority's absence rate has a long term target of 4 days per person which continues to compare favourably with other National Parks as well as the rest of the public sector. Despite several long term absences, the absence rate at the end of February was 3.6 days per person (from 1 April 2018) and Officers believe that the target of 4 days won't be significantly exceeded this year.
- 6.3 The Health and Safety Executive have recently released their summary statistics for 2018. Across Great Britain plc sickness absence rates have been broadly flat. This picture is the same in the Authority, although absence rates continue to be lower than the national norms. More strikingly, the major cause of illness resulting in absence from work is stress/anxiety/depression which accounted for 57% of lost working days in the country. The figure within the Authority has varied over recently years and has been as high as 20%, but in the current year looks to be much lower at approximately 5% of absence. It isn't possible to say categorically whether the programme of training staff in mental health first aid has resulted in this reduction this figure, but it is Officers' view that it has certainly been a contributory factor

## 7. **Health and Safety Policy Update**

- 7.1 A number of amendments and additions have been made to the Policy over recent years, primarily to reflect the increased use of volunteers and the changing nature of the Authority's work as well as provide greater clarity about the responsibilities for key posts. The Policy has grown significantly in size as a result and the outcome is a document that has become long and detailed.
- 7.2 Officers are keen to ensure that the Policy is both sufficiently detailed to adequately cover the Authority's obligations and succinct enough for it to be used and referred to regularly by staff. It is intended that the Policy is split into two parts, the first of which is relatively brief, detailing the Authority's broad health and safety policy principles and individual responsibility. This will be supported by a detailed operational appendix which will outline the personal responsibilities of key post holders. The Policy will be amended and presented to Members at least annually, but the operational appendix will be updated as and when required by Officers. It is expected that the revised policy will be presented to Members at June NPA.

## 8. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

- 8.1 There are no significant additional financial or staff issues related to the contents of this report. Budgetary provision is sufficient to pay for all appropriate Health and Safety training and personal protective equipment.

## 9. **Recommendation**

9.1 That Members;

- Note the contents of the report and approve the draft action plan contained in paragraph 5.1.

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**Background documents to this report**

NPA Reports, December 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018

FRASC Reports 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019

Health and Safety Executive statistics <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/hssh1718.pdf>