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North York Moors National Park Authority

Performance Assessment Report

February 2011



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1 Introductory comments

- 1.1 The North York Moors National Park Authority (the Authority) is reasonably self aware as was illustrated by the content of the self assessment document produced to inform the assessment team. A number of the issues identified by the peer review team were already known to the Authority. Whilst some of those issues have been identified and considered under the seven themes (or Key Lines of Enquiry), they do not all appear in the list of recommendations (section 12) as they are already being addressed.
- 1.2 The Authority responded well to the issues raised in the last National Park Authority Performance Assessment (NPAPA) and applied itself well to achieving its improvement objectives. Performance across National Park statutory purposes has continued to be to a high standard but there is a sense in which it could deliver better benefits for the National Park and its communities through using its strong collaborative culture as the springboard for smarter working and greater innovation.
- 1.3 A feature of this current National Park Authority Performance Assessment (NPAPA) is the raising of expectations within the Key Lines of Enquiry to increase the standards of performance required to attain the assessed levels. These are: performing poorly (1), performing adequately (2), performing well (3) and performing excellently (4). With a grading of 2 as acceptable baseline performance, an Authority that obtains a grading of 3 for a theme will be performing in an above average way and delivering to a very high standard. A grading of 4 will show exceptional delivery. The assessment scores for this Authority are shown on the last page of this report.

2 Background

- 2.1 National Park Authorities (NPAs) are required to achieve best value through structured approaches which improve their effectiveness, efficiency and economy.
- 2.2 To provide an objective external assessment of the individual NPA performance, each authority is subject to periodic review through NPAPA.
- 2.3 The NPAPA methodology uses a peer review team approach which is independently led and facilitated by SOLACE Enterprises. The process was developed and first applied for most NPAs in 2005. It is based on best practice assessment for public bodies and uses techniques similar to the former Comprehensive Performance Assessment and is complementary to Comprehensive Area Assessment. NPAPA has been agreed by Defra, Department for Communities and Local Government, the Audit Commission and the English National Park Authorities as the appropriate approach for NPAs.
- 2.4 The NPAPA process is intended to give each National Park Authority (NPA) a better appreciation of its strengths and weaknesses in order to assist it to improve the quality of the important services which it offers to the public. It will



show how good the Authority's performance is in delivering its strategic objectives and where it can make improvements.

2.5 The aims of peer assessment are to:

- Provide an objective, robust and managed external challenge to an NPA self assessment of its current performance;
- Encourage thinking about strengths and areas for improvement;
- Contribute to strong and forward looking improvement planning.

2.6 The SOLACE Enterprises model of peer assessment for NPAs involves a National Park Officer/Chief Executive, a serving local authority Chief Executive, an NPA Member and an NPA Staff reviewer, all working with a SOLACE Enterprises facilitator for 4 days onsite. This model has been specifically designed for providing peer assessment for NPAs.

3 The North York Moors NPA performance assessment process

3.1 The assessment of the North York Moors National Park Authority (NYMNP) began several weeks before the November/December 2010 on-site period when a provisional timetable of activities was drawn up and background documentation was circulated to the peer team. This included the authority's own self assessment which was considered closely by the whole team to help determine the focus of the assessment.

3.2 The peer team was also briefed for the process. The team was:

- Mark Cullinan, Chief Executive, Lancaster City Council
- Jim Dixon, Chief Executive & National Park Officer, Peak District NPA
- Graham Essex-Crosby, SOLACE Facilitator
- Kate Payne, Performance Management Adviser, Staff Assessor, Lake District NPA
- Stephen Johnson, Member, currently Chair of the Broads Authority

3.3 On the evening prior to the visit the team met to prepare for the assessment process. In that preparatory meeting the team:

- Reviewed the proposed methodology for NPAPA.
- Reviewed the background information provided by the authority, including the self-assessment and related evidence.
- Discussed initial lines of enquiry to be pursued during the visit and any additional activities and documentation that was needed to gather information on these.
- Confirmed the team roles and responsibilities for the assessment period.

3.4 The team have had regard to the whole of the published Key Lines of Enquiry for NPAPA, but gave particular attention to the issues that appeared from the documentation to warrant more detailed focus. It was recognised by the team that they could not look at absolutely everything in the same level of detail and that the process needed to be bounded in some way.



- 3.5 The various methods that the team used to gather information included:
- Face to face and telephone interviews with a cross section of stakeholders from inside and outside the authority.
 - Small group discussions.
 - Staff, Manager and Member sessions involving group discussions.
 - The severe weather prevented a familiarisation tour of the area and the team were unable to see any site-based projects however the team received an audio-visual presentation on the features of the planned route
 - Analysis of supplementary papers submitted to the team in response to specific questions/requests during the course of the review
- 3.6 Throughout the process the team held a continuing dialogue with the NPA to reflect back what they were learning and the way that their views were forming. This provided the Authority with an opportunity to present the team with additional information and also helped to generate an ownership of our feedback and the thinking and reasoning behind our views.
- 3.7 On the final day of the visit the team fed back the results of the information gathering process in a more structured way.
- 3.8 The team took care to note areas of strengths as well as areas for improvement, but since the main aim of the assessment process is to stimulate improvement, this report gives comparatively more attention has been given in this report to explaining and evidencing the areas on which the team believes the NPA should focus its attention in the future
- 3.9 The following sections describe the team's assessment of the authority's performance matched against the seven themes of the published Key Lines of Enquiry.

4 Theme 1: Quality of vision and the Authority's plans to help achieve it

Strengths:

- 4.1 The vision for the North York Moors National Park was adopted in the 1998 National Park Management Plan (NPMP) and identified the special qualities of the North York Moors. The NPMP has been subject to a number of reviews, most recently in 2003/4, and little change has been made to the vision which is challenging, aspirational and relevant today. Public consultation and key stakeholder endorsement was a feature of both NPMP production and subsequent reviews.
- 4.2 The NPMP Review (2003/4) looks at seven elements of the North York Moors covering conservation of the natural environment; conservation of cultural heritage; recreation management; promoting understanding; traffic and transport; development and community needs and ways of working. These elements are further analysed into 25 sub-elements covering 135 objectives.
- 4.3 The State of the Park Report provided a body of evidence to underpin the NPMP and established a set of indicators to measure the impact of activity within the



National Park. The report reflected the essential environmental, social and economic aspects of the National Park and has been subject to review every three years. State of the Park data is drawn from a number of in-house and independent sources and there is a good flow of data between the Authority and statutory partners. A comprehensive range of bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements with key agency partners help deliver the plan.

- 4.4 The Authority has embarked upon a comprehensive review of the NPMP with the expressed intention of providing a more concise and strategic document. The process for developing the new NPMP is innovative, inclusive and partners speak well of their engagement in the process.
- 4.5 The NPA produces a three-yearly business plan that identifies the strategic priorities for the Authority and there is a “golden thread” linking the objectives in the Business Plan through Departmental Action Plans and down to individual members of staff. For this purpose the original objectives in the NPMP have been summarised and reduced within five themes – first statutory purpose; second statutory purpose; the planning service, corporate and democratic core and the wider agenda. Monitoring of the Business Plan is undertaken quarterly and there is also an annual performance report.

Issues to consider:

- 4.6 Partners and stakeholders are aware of the NPA’s statutory framework – 1st and 2nd purposes and socio-economic duty – and regard the Authority as a strong partner. The nature of the current NPMP however has made the development of a comprehensive process for monitoring and delivering it difficult to achieve, and therefore there is a lack of partner ownership of the NPMP, with some partners unable to articulate the Authority’s priorities. Establishing a framework which allows the new NPMP to operate effectively in this area within the expected climate of diminishing resources, where partner commitment and input may be more critical, needs to be more carefully scripted, ensuring that it is realistic and attainable. It is not clear how the NPA intends to use participative processes to gather the degree of buy-in and innovative partnerships that are required.
- 4.7 The current NPMP with its 135 objectives is broad and was described to the team during the review as ‘bland’ and ‘woolly’. It is recognised that the NPMP contains objectives which are designed to be long-term and relatively unchanging, but even so some of its objectives were not sufficiently well-defined to facilitate their translation into measurable outcomes or meaningful targets within the regular Business Plan or Departmental Action Plan cycle. The range of bilateral and multilateral agreements identified in 4.3 above partly compensate for this but in preparing the new NPMP the Authority and its partners will need to give this matter further attention with a view to providing a sharper focus.
- 4.8 Over time the link (the “golden thread”) between the NPMP and other plans and strategies has become less clear. The NPMP is seen by many as no longer actively driving the delivery of National Park purposes. There is a perception amongst some managers of a lack of clarity between the current NPMP and the Business Plan, and between the Business Plan and Departmental Action Plans. This could be a risk for the future where more flexible working will be required.



- 4.9 The Annual Performance Report and Plan (APRP) contains details of achievements together with a range of supporting information. The document focuses on project work where achievements and improvements are clearly identified. The layout of the APRP however differs from the business plan and this makes comparison of achievement against plan less straightforward.

5 Theme 2: Setting and using priorities

Strengths:

- 5.1 There is a very strong culture of getting things done on the ground, within a framework that strikes a good balance between determination of strategy and hands-on delivery and this has been sustained over a medium to longer term period. Much of the priority work is delivered through effective partnerships and overall there are good levels of success in delivering business plan priorities.
- 5.2 The focus provided through the Business Plan has allowed the Authority to maintain good organisational concentration on priorities and has been effective in allocating resources to achieving the NPA's targets. Annual revisions of the Business Plan allow the NPA to adjust its programmes and spending plans where necessary but always seeking to be consistent with the three year period of the Business Plan. The Business Plan contains clear statements as to priorities, areas where resources will be reduced and areas that will only be pursued if there is an acceptable level of external funding. Active management of the Authority's finances, including establishing a Landscape Intervention Fund, has strengthened its ability to deliver on its priorities.
- 5.3 Members are involved in setting priorities for the organisation and have clear ownership of them. The strong staff appraisal system facilitates the cascade of priorities to the individual level.
- 5.4 There is a consistent record of attracting significant external funding and in particular working with Natural England, Yorkshire Forward, the Forestry Commission, English Heritage and local authorities. The NPA makes good use of its own resources as leverage.

Issues to consider:

- 5.5 The way that the priorities are themed within the Business Plan (see 4.5 above) reflects to some extent the departmental structure and when cascaded through departments and down to staff can lead to individuals focussing on one National Park statutory purpose for example rather than taking a wider view.
- 5.6 Expectations on public bodies are changing and the Authority may need to identify new and more innovative ways of achieving its objectives, delivering on its priorities and in service provision. This may need a different outlook from Members and the senior management team.



6 Theme 3: Achievement of outcomes: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the National Park

Strengths:

- 6.1 Over a sustained period of time, the scale of the Authority's work in delivering its key conservation priorities has been considerable, demonstrating both high quality and consistent achievement. Much of the work has been delivered through partnership working supported by a series of bi- and multi-lateral agreements with key organisations. These agreements enable the Authority to ensure that partners contribute effectively to the delivery of relevant conservation objectives.
- 6.2 There have been strong achievements across a broad range of sometimes innovative projects, including Butterfly Conservation for the Duke of Burgundy; the Cornfield Flowers Project; 'Slowing the Flow' project; the Fresh Water Pearl Mussel Project, the restoration of Planted Ancient Woodland Sites and the use of grants, external funding and planning powers for conservation areas and buildings at risk. The Authority has worked with Natural England to establish 19 Moorland High Level Stewardship (HLS) agreements covering 28,000 hectares. The use of HLS monies has enabled the Authority to switch its funding into a Landscape Intervention Fund (LIF). The LIF has been used with good strategic effect to provide pump priming and match funding for external bodies and to provide finance for the NPA's own conservation activity.
- 6.3 Where data are available, the quality of conservation services is good and the use of guidelines for repetitive tasks (e.g. dry stone walling, fencing) contributes to the quality of conservation services. The Planning Division of the NPA also produces a series of guidance notes for applicants that are being transformed into supplementary planning documents.

Issues to consider:

- 6.4 Whilst the Authority engages well with its key partners in delivering its conservation objectives consideration could be given about identifying an even wider range of stakeholders to help deliver conservation objectives – for example from business and the voluntary or 'third' sector. Further work could be done to capitalise on excellent partner relations to develop innovative economic activity for delivering conservation and environmental outcomes.
- 6.5 Staff have an ambition to take on larger and more innovative projects and it is possible that the strong performance management culture of the organisation may limit some of this innovation.
- 6.6 In aspects of conservation activity there are few indicators for outcomes. Data in some areas is focussed on input and output measures rather at the expense of outcome measures. Whilst the Authority can demonstrate progress towards the conservation objectives it has set itself, consideration needs to be given on how it will assess the outcomes and impact of those projects in terms of enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.



- 6.7 In setting quality standards the NPA should seek to ensure that its planned level of quality compares well to similar work in other national parks or similar bodies with commensurate levels of resources.
- 6.8 The 'departmentalisation' of priority delivery - see 4.5 and 5.5 above – may mean that opportunities are being missed to engage the wider public in conservation work. It is not always clear whether all of the organisation's objectives are fully delivered by staff focusing on conservation outcomes. The Authority could take more risks by enabling communities to contribute more directly to conservation outcomes as well as thereby delivering an increase in understanding and enjoyment of the National Park.

7 Theme 4: Achievement of outcomes: promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public

Strengths:

- 7.1 Good progress is being made towards achieving the 'promoting understanding and enjoyment' priorities set by the NPA for itself in the business plan including improvements to the rights of way network, bridleways and footpaths and the NPA's management of the Cleveland Way National Trail. The Moorsbus continues to serve the area well in terms of delivering and promoting sustainable transport. The Authority has responded to comments about visitor centres and there has been considerable investment in the Moors National Park Centre and plans are well-advanced to improve the visitor centre at Sutton Bank. Each year the NPA delivers a programme of cultural heritage events, exhibitions, outreach and learning activities and a new Education Strategy has exceeded its first year target in terms of student contacts. There have been a number of cycling initiatives and work continues on upgrading facilities and routes for cyclists.
- 7.2 The NPA's audio-visual presentation at Scarborough Borough Council's Whitby tourist information centre offers a good example of partnership working and projects such as Lime and Ice and Coast Alive! demonstrate the NPA's willingness to engage with a range of partners and local communities in delivering its 'promoting understanding and enjoyment' priorities.
- 7.3 The NPA is able to evidence significant achievement in terms of the quality of its own contribution to 'promoting understanding and enjoyment'. There is a strong track record of improvement in relation to the accessibility of rights of way, the customer experience at the Moors National Park Centre and investment in facilities e.g. toilets and car parks. The NPA has been awarded the Customer Service Excellence Standard (2010) which recognises the Authority's attention to quality of service and measuring customer satisfaction.
- 7.4 The Authority is aware that its website is no longer meeting the needs of users and work is well-advanced for the production and launch of a new site. A start has also been made on the use of social media to reach a wider audience and to encourage inter-action with the NPA.
- 7.5 In its business plan documentation the Authority has adopted a principle of working that seeks to 'develop opportunities for people from all walks of life and



of all abilities to help further National Park purposes'. The NYMNPA has achieved a national equality standard and was one of the leaders in work on the MOSAIC project: this latter involvement continues to grow.

Issues to consider:

- 7.6 There is improving provision for people with physical disabilities in terms of rights of way accessibility, visitor facilities and advice leaflets for example, but more could be done in terms of providing the same level of positive customer experience as is achieved by many groups for those from under-represented groups such as ethnic minorities and young people.
- 7.7 The Authority is aware of difficulties with the current tourism partnership. Progress towards a more cohesive tourism product is being made with a range of organisations including Ryedale and Scarborough local authorities and at a sub-regional level with Welcome to Yorkshire. The NYMNPA is well-placed to play a proactive role in developing a robust approach to tourism and there is some urgency in doing this to address the existing needs of tourism businesses in the National Park.
- 7.8 Since its introduction the Moorsbus has been a leading example of sustainable tourism. There is a sense in which the Authority could build on this success, for example by integrating the service with other sustainable tourism initiatives or with better provision for people with disabilities. Consideration may also be given to looking wider at a more comprehensive plan for sustainability in all aspects of the visitor economy and a sustainable visitor experience.

8 Theme 5: Achievement of outcomes: wider sustainable development

Strengths:

- 8.1 Volunteering is well structured, volunteers make a strong contribution to all aspects of the work of the NPA to a high level and they have become a vital part of the NPA's outreach and community engagement effort. Work is also underway to involve those with disabilities in a range of activities.
- 8.2 The Authority is working well with its local communities. The Parish Forums continue to be well regarded and evidence the NPA's intention to 'make a difference' through building positive relationships with resident communities. Feedback to both applicants and communities on the outcome of planning decisions is very much welcomed by those concerned. Members of the Authority are seen to take responsibility for their development control decisions where these are contrary to officer recommendation. The Village Caretaker scheme has been introduced in ten communities and significant grant aid has been given to local artists and craftspeople.
- 8.3 The Authority's apprenticeship scheme is an example of the very best practice in terms of its longevity, the number of young people engaged, the relationship with education providers and the wide range of training provided. This best practice is also being taken up by partners locally with the support of the NPA. It



contributes directly to NPMP outcomes and towards building capacity and commitment to the National Park by local young people.

- 8.4 There has been a step change in the delivery of affordable housing since the adoption of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and the NPA plays an active role in the North Yorkshire Rural Housing Enabler programme. The NPA's approach is seen as pro-active and business-like.
- 8.5 The Authority has taken a measured and considered approach to its involvement in Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) including the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership and to its work with regional and national bodies. This approach coupled with the personal involvement of the Chief Executive is welcomed and respected by partner organisations. The Authority is the lead delivery partner for the greater North York Moors LEADER programme and has made effective use of Sustainable Development Fund monies for example in terms of stimulating development and awareness of renewable energy and efficiency measures. The Authority's work on a joint planning approach to the Whitby Business Park has also been well-received.
- 8.6 A range of practices have been adopted by the Authority to minimise the environmental impact of its operations. These have included reductions in energy use at the main premises, procuring vehicles with low environmental performance and increasing recycling levels. Staff are clearly committed to achieving more progress in this area and recognise a clear commitment from the Authority's leadership.

Issues to consider:

- 8.7 Although the planning service is generally an area of high performance, the development management service has not always met the Authority's targets which have been set higher than national targets. The most recent information shows that performance is now good and improving however these gains in terms of quality and timeliness need to be sustained over the medium and longer term if public confidence and customer satisfaction are to be maintained.
- 8.8 Partners would welcome it if the NPA could do more to deliver better social and particularly economic objectives for its communities. This is a reflection on the role played by the Authority, on the particular challenges facing the predominantly rural area and on the apparent shortfall in positive action for the economy from other responsible agencies. The new NPMP offers the scope and opportunity to define a more effective framework for sustainable economic development in the National Park. It needs to pursue a more strategic and partnership-based approach to this, providing a longer-term commitment to activities which achieve purposes and economic outcomes at the same time.
- 8.9 The Authority has made a significant contribution to addressing the climate change agenda in the area of the National Park and in terms of its own work on adaptation and mitigation. There is now an opportunity for the Authority to develop a leadership role in relation to climate change within the National Park. Further work is needed to translate its NPMP aspirations into a clearer sense of intent, strategy and delivery for the main issues relating to climate change such as visitor economy, land and farming and energy generation. Again this might be



articulated through the emerging NPMP and the mechanisms for partnership-based delivery developed through it.

9 Theme 6: Organisational capacity, use of resources, and governance

Strengths:

- 9.1 Financial reporting and accountability is strong. Budgeting and monitoring are thorough, timely and well structured with the External Auditor issuing an unqualified report on published financial statements. Internal financial systems and processes are consistent with the size and nature of the business and the Internal Auditor provides regular reports on their efficacy. There is no separate Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) although budget reporting to Members contains figures for the subsequent two years. Financial data is also included in the Business Plan. Members and staff have confidence in the Authority's current financial strategy, including the way the approach to expected cuts in Defra's National Park Grant from 2011/12 to 2014/15 is being handled.
- 9.2 There is good feedback from customers about the services that the Authority provides and a positive customer focus is evident throughout the organisation.
- 9.3 The Authority has a well-developed performance management culture evidenced by the production of timely and reliable data for consideration by Members and managers. Under-performance is addressed quickly.
- 9.4 The Authority has adopted an Ethical Framework which sets the agenda for the way that business is conducted. The Framework is supported by a good range of documentation for its codes of practice and by other supporting mechanisms such as an active Standards Committee. There is evidence that the documentation is given practical application.
- 9.5 The NPA has an Asset Management Strategy and supporting set of documents that are reviewed on a regular basis. A similar pro-active approach is applied to document management.
- 9.6 The Authority's People Management Strategy covers Members, volunteers and staff and has led to the implementation of a range of practical actions e.g. to develop shared learning. The staff performance appraisal process is robust and identifies development needs in addition to assessing individual performance. There is a positive and co-operative relationship with the trades union. The responsive and collegiate culture of the staff and the confidence in their leaders is also positive.

Issues to consider:

- 9.7 Whilst the Authority makes some use of benchmarking techniques there is a need to improve its understanding of the unit costs for its activities and how they link to performance and service standards. Managers seemed unaware of their unit costs and are consequently unable to contrast and compare in-house costs against say market provision or best performing National Park Authority.



Benchmarking would also support the Authority's efforts in driving further efficiencies.

- 9.8 Value for money forms an element of the Authority's approach to managing its services and resources but in general seems to be focussed on lowest cost options. Such an approach may be subject to challenge and greater risk in a future characterised by reducing external grant aid. The Authority's purchasing policy dates from 2000 and should be reviewed and updated in line with current best practice in order that the Authority is able to commission and procure quality services and supplies, tailored to local needs, delivering sustainable outcomes and value for money.
- 9.9 The Authority obtains its risk management advice from North Yorkshire County Council and the Corporate Risk Register is updated annually. This programmed approach does not necessarily embed risk management principles within the organisation and in particular it may not ensure effective considerations of risk during the decision-making process. Committee items and reports should consistently address the full range of corporate implications (e.g. finance, human resources, policy and equalities & diversity) and in particular, aspects of risk assessment and management.
- 9.10 The Members are a valuable resource for the organisation and are required to attend a number of formal meetings – Authority, Planning and other Committees – as well as participate in informal but structured discussions on key matters such as policy development and prioritisation. These organisation-based activities are potentially at the expense of Member involvement in their communities and consideration might be given to reducing the more formal demands on Members to enable them to develop their community leadership role.
- 9.11 Internal communications are well received by staff and enable them to be informed about the organisation and its challenges. There is a sense in which the staff have the skills and capacity to offer more for the benefit of the Authority and the National Park. More effective ways should be explored so that bottom-to-top communications are improved particularly for the 'big ideas' that might be developed going up through the organisation.
- 9.12 There are concerns about the Authority's accommodation in terms of size and fitness for purpose. Possible reductions in staff levels and financial pressures suggest that the Authority might usefully consider future accommodation requirements as part of its approach to asset management.

10 Theme 7: Improving performance

Strengths:

- 10.1 The NPA is viewed as a key partner by many organisations and this reflects the high personal regard that they have for the Chief Executive who has strong visibility and credibility with staff, Members, communities and partner organisations. Members are a strong, coherent group who are wholly committed to delivering National Park purposes. The role of Members is underpinned by a formal development scheme and by the use of informal seminars on specific



topics. Members of the Senior Management Team are considered to work well together and managers are viewed as very good at delivering the organisation's priorities and are highly regarded. Staff are confident in the leadership from across the organisation.

- 10.2 Performance and satisfaction levels are monitored and analysed. The NPA has a track record in delivering the priorities it has set for itself. The performance management system identifies under-performance and this enables issues to be dealt with quickly. Customer satisfaction levels are increasing in a number of key areas and the Customer Service Excellence accreditation represents an independent validation of the Authority's efforts in this regard.
- 10.3 The Authority has begun an inclusive process to refresh the NPMP but it is too early to say whether the Authority will identify all the areas where they need to improve against previous performance. The Authority is aware of the internal and external climate and context within which it will be bringing about improvements although it was unclear whether the simple list set out in the Authority's self assessment document will be the blueprint for the new strategic planning framework.

Issues to consider:

- 10.4 National Parks are reliant upon Members to promote the work and the achievements of the organisation particularly in local communities and also to represent the Authority in area-based activity. Partners reported that the leadership role of Members was not clearly visible to them and consideration might usefully be given how the profile of Members and thereby the National Park and the NPA might be raised through Members developing their community leadership roles in order to make them more visible.
- 10.5 The Authority's change management style is very consultative in nature and there is a risk that this can sometimes restrict the speed at which decisions are made, the speed at which changes are introduced and the degree of innovation. This approach may prove problematic in the future given the forthcoming challenges facing the NPA.
- 10.6 In the current climate and with pressures on public sector finances, the priorities of partner organisations will change and external funding from partners may not be sustainable at previous levels. New sources of funding need to be secured if the Authority is to continue to deliver on the ground at or near present levels. New sources of financial support might include different partners, commercial opportunities or sponsorship for example.
- 10.7 The Summarised Improvement Plan that accompanied the Authority's self assessment whilst described as 'work in progress', appears low key and does not yet suggest a confident or urgent approach to improvement and change. The proposed improvements are discursive, tentative and inconsistent and seem not to be based on a thorough, organisation-wide process of identifying improvements. The capacity for transformational leadership needs to be increased across both Members and senior management given the challenges ahead. This relates not only to financial issues but also political, external environment and change management. Consideration should be given to structured leadership development that would allow a wider group of Members



and senior staff to share transformational leadership roles. There is a risk that without this the current style of leadership might limit progress, curb innovation and make the organisation less able to face a world of dwindling resources with a clear view of the NPA's purpose and unique role.

11 Good Practice and Special Features

- 11.1 The NPA demonstrates a number of areas of good practice including:
- The Apprenticeship Scheme
 - Working with volunteers
 - The use of Parish Forums to engage with local communities and particularly in feeding back on planning decisions
- 11.2 There are a number of features of the work being undertaken or supported by the NPA that warrant special mention and these include:
- The Moorsbus as a continuing 'good practice' example of sustainable transport
 - The transformation of the Moors National Park Centre
 - A successful track record in securing external funding, and
 - Securing a wide range of achievements through partnership working in wildlife conservation e.g. Fresh Water Pearl Mussel project, the Restoration of Planted Ancient Woodland Sites and the Cornfield Flowers projects

12 Recommendations

- 12.1 The key recommendations of the team are shown below arranged under the seven themes of the Key Lines of Enquiry.

1. Quality of vision and the Authority's plans to help achieve it

- 12.2 In making arrangements for delivery of the new NPMP, consideration should be given to establishing an over-arching structure that facilitates partner knowledge, ownership and monitoring of the NPMP.
- 12.3 The objectives in the new NPMP should provide a clear focus for delivery and monitoring.
- 12.4 The preparation of a new NPMP offers the opportunity to provide a more visible 'golden thread' link throughout the whole of the Authority's strategic planning framework

2. Setting and using priorities

- 12.5 Managers and staff should be encouraged to have a wider appreciation of how their work can contribute to the Authority's whole agenda.



3. Achievement of outcomes: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the National Park

- 12.6 Consideration needs to be given on how the Authority will assess the outcomes and impact of its conservation projects in terms of enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.
- 12.7 The Authority needs to set clear quality standards for its main conservation services and benchmark those standards with comparable organisations.
- 12.8 The Authority needs to review its approach to delivering its conservation work in order to maximise the opportunities to engage partners and others and the benefits of cross-fertilisation with 2nd purpose activity and the socio-economic duty.

4. Achievement of outcomes: promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public

- 12.9 The Authority should consider how it might apply its approach to service provision for the disabled to other under-represented groups.
- 12.10 Consideration needs to be given to identifying other opportunities to develop a sustainable visitor experience.

5. Achievement of outcomes: wider sustainable development

- 12.11 The Authority should consider how it might use the new NPMP to define a more effective framework for sustainable economic development in the National Park.
- 12.12 The Authority should seek to develop a leadership role in relation to climate change within the National Park.

6. Organisational capacity, use of resources, and governance

- 12.13 The NPA needs to improve its understanding of the unit costs for its activities and how they link to performance and service standards.
- 12.14 The Authority's purchasing policy should be reviewed and updated in line with current best practice.
- 12.15 Committee items and reports should consistently address the full range of corporate implications
- 12.16 Consideration might be given to reducing the more formal demands on Members to enable them to develop their community leadership role
- 12.17 Internal communication structures and processes should be reviewed to improve two-way exchange of 'big ideas'.
- 12.18 As part of its asset management considerations The Authority should review its accommodation requirements.



7. Improving performance

- 12.19 The community leadership and ambassadorial role of Members needs to be strengthened
- 12.20 New sources of funding need to be secured if the Authority is to continue to deliver on the ground at or near present levels.
- 12.21 Increase transformational leadership capacity for Members and senior management



13 Summary of Assessment Scores

13.1 The team's assessment of scores for each of the KLOE themes are as follows:

Key Line of Enquiry	Score
1. Quality of Vision	2
2. Setting and Using Priorities	3
3. Achievement of Outcomes: Conservation	3
4. Achievement of Outcomes: Promoting Understanding and Service Delivery	3
5. Achievement of Outcomes: Wider Sustainable Development	4
6. Use of Resources: Managing Money Managing the Business Managing other Resources Use of Resources – Overall score	3
7. Leadership & Improving Performance	3

Scoring

- 1 An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements – **performs poorly**
- 2 An organisation that meets only minimum requirements – **performs adequately**
- 3 An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements – **performs well**
- 4 An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements – **performs excellently.**

With a grading of 2 as acceptable baseline performance, an Authority that obtains a grading of 3 for a theme will be performing in an above average way and delivering to a very high standard. A grading of 4 will show exceptional delivery.

Graham Essex-Crosby on behalf of SOLACE Enterprises
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