

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

1 February 2015

**Health and Safety**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To update Members on the progress made on the 2015/16 Health and Safety action plan, and;
- 1.2 To seek approval for the 2016/17 action plan.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Both Members and Officers are keen that Health and Safety continues to have a high priority and the following approach was agreed at the February 2014 meeting of this Committee;
- The February meeting of FRASC will be presented with a proposed action plan for the Authority's health and safety activity during the coming year;
  - Progress against this action plan would then be presented to the December National Park Authority meeting, thereby enabling all Members to have an input on an annual basis. This meeting would also be provided with data regarding the number of accidents and near misses reported, as well as working days lost as a result of workplace accidents.
- 2.2 At the November 2015 meeting of this Committee, Members and Officers agreed that this approach would be supported by additional short papers being presented to Members at each FRASC. The first of these will provide a more detailed statistical analysis of the Authority's safety record and sickness absence data.

**3. Progress on the 2015/16 Health and Safety Action Plan**

- 3.1 Members approved the 2015/16 Action Plan in February 2015. The Authority's Health and Safety Group, chaired by the Assistant Director of Corporate Services, is responsible for ensuring that the annual action plan is delivered. Progress to date is as follows;
1. Review of the Authority's approach to health and safety training, including refresher time periods;
- The approach to health and safety training has been reviewed and a schedule of refresher training agreed. In most cases, for example in the use of chainsaws, there are no legal timescales or requirements for refresher training, so the Authority has adopted an approach based on best practice elsewhere. Members have previously been made aware of the schedule of refresher training. A variety of different methods will be used to deliver training cost effectively including on-line and face to face delivery.

2. Thorough review of the processes in place for the control of substances hazardous to health;
  - The Ranger service has fully reviewed all of the substances held in stores at the Authority's sites. This has resulted in the disposal of substances no longer required. Safety data sheets have been updated for all substances held.
  - A training session with regard to CoSHH was delivered to the Ranger team in late October by NYCC as part of the 2015/16 service level agreement. This was well received and has resulted in a number of other relatively minor CoSHH related action points which are currently being addressed.
3. Full implementation of the action plan resulting from the ATV accident;
  - The Director of Park Services has met regularly with the Chief Executive to update him on progress being made. All action points (reported previously to Members) have been completed.
4. Development of a plan to ensure better reporting of 'near misses';
  - A number of reminders to report near misses have been sent out in staff bulletins and health and safety bulletins during the year. Directors have 'near misses' as a standing item on their team meeting agenda as does the Health and Safety Group. Every opportunity will continue to be taken to remind staff that reporting of these potential incidents can stop accidents happening.
5. Integration of Ranger and Volunteer service risk assessments to ensure a consistent approach;
  - Risk assessments are reviewed annually and this piece of work will be completed in the 2015/16 review. Progress on this will be confirmed at the meeting.
6. Consider the practicality and costs involved with developing IT based solutions to tracking lone workers;
  - There has been a trial using mobile phones which has not proved successful due to limited coverage. Officers are considering other options and a decision will be taken balancing the costs of a proposed system with the potential risks inherent in work that staff carry out. Current policies and practices are based on the assumption that mobile coverage will NOT be available.
7. Chief Executive and Directors to complete the Local Government Association's 'Health and Safety at Work - Effective Leadership' matrix to assess corporate performance;
  - This work was completed in January as part of a full and comprehensive discussion about health and safety matters. The Chief Executive and Directors were able to consider what further actions needed to be put in place to continue to actively manage health and safety at a corporate level. The key actions have been included in the 2016/17 Action Plan detailed in paragraph 4.1.
8. External audit of actions taken since the 2013 health and safety review;
  - Outcome of internal audit report and progress on associated actions reported to Members at FRASC in November. Overall a finding of Substantial Assurance was recorded. Our internal audit is externally provided.

9. Develop an effective way of using the information in the HSE's electronic bulletins to enhance staff understanding of wider health and safety issues.

- The HSE's electronic bulletins are received regularly and relevant items circulated to the Health and Safety Group. Where there are examples that are relevant to our work, they are shared more widely.

3.2 In addition to the above actions, a number of training sessions have taken place led by Dominic Passman who leads on providing the Health and Safety service level agreement held with NYCC. He also facilitated the Chief Executive/Directors discussion regarding the LGA's Health and Safety at Work - Effective Leadership matrix.

3.3 The strategic overview that Members need to take with regard to Health and Safety matters was included as part of the Members' training session in October 2015. The presentation (available on the Members' extranet) was based on work done by the Institute of Occupational Safety Health specifically for elected Members of local Authorities to provide guidance on how to get health and safety right.

#### 4. **2016/17 Action Plan**

4.1 At the December NPA, Members agreed with Officers' initial thoughts regarding the draft action plan for 2016/17. This has now been expanded and the proposed plan is detailed below;

- A staff survey investigating attitudes to health and safety to be conducted – this will be based on a survey developed by the Forestry Commission;
- Validate the effectiveness of health and safety arrangements resulting from the delivery of the Volunteer Strategy;
- Implement follow-up actions resulting from the investigation into the accident at Hutton le Hole car park on 27 October;
- Invite the SLA provider to visit an ongoing bridge construction to give an independent view on the safety issues relating to these complex pieces of work;
- Review induction processes to ensure that all new staff receive timely and proportionate health and safety training;
- Introduce targets for each Director to ensure that their Department carries out a specific number of spot checks on both contractors and staff working methods – the aim of this is to both support good working practices and to weed out any bad ones.
- The Health and Safety Group to recommend to the Chief Executive how the proper and effective consideration of health and safety matters might be better incorporated into formal reports and policy development

4.2 The plan provides a mix of developing initiatives already taken this year, looking at other practical day to day issues and seeking to use external advice effectively as well as taking a corporate view. Members' opinions on these or any other items they feel should be included are very welcome.

4.3 Officers are particularly keen to ensure that the various volunteering groups that are expected to be working within the Park during 2016/17 have had the arrangements for their health and safety properly considered and dealt with before the new arrangements come into operation. For example, it is expected that voluntary and community groups will be undertaking work more independently than previously on tasks which the NPA has suggested. Officers are keen to ensure that the Authority doesn't by default become responsible for the health and safety of individuals over which it cannot be reasonably expected to have control. A range of actions will be taken, but Officers felt it appropriate to give Members an example.

4.4 A group wants to undertake brushcutting and strimming work – the Authority’s staff were asked to provide training in using the equipment. Officers were concerned that this could create the attitude that the NPA was taking responsibility for the overall H&S of the group which it is not in a position to do. In the event of an accident moreover, the standard of training would come under scrutiny. Officers therefore took the view that it would be a more prudent approach (and a better use of Officers’ time) to offer to pay for the individuals to be professionally trained elsewhere. Otherwise, however, officers are intending to move forward with such projects on the basis that our responsibilities towards self-organised, associate volunteer, groups working at the behest/suggestion of the NPA are similar to those it has to contractors (for example, there will be a written agreement setting out responsibilities for insurance and health and safety etc. and officers will ask for H&S plans and carry out a level of spot check but are not supervising the tasks). This is clearly a different level of responsibility to that owed to volunteer groups organised by the NPA directly.

4.5 The responsibility for implementing the action plan rests with the Assistant Director of Corporate Services and the Health and Safety Group.

## **5 Update regarding Accident at Hutton le Hole Car Park on 27 October 2015**

5.1 Members were made aware of the detail of this accident at the December NPA meeting. At the time of writing this report, the member of staff involved has not returned to work. His broken arm is healing, however, and he is expected at work in the near future.

5.2 Officers gathered initial information about the accident and reported it to the HSE. This was required under RIDDOR 2013 due to the potential length of sickness absence and the arm fracture. The HSE has acknowledged the accident report in early November, but no further action has been taken.

5.3 At the Car Park Wardens meeting on 24 November the issues raised by this incident were thoroughly discussed. There was also debate about trying to identify jobs which Car Park Wardens can complete and those which they can’t do, whilst still encouraging individual initiative. It was concluded that their while their core roles are similar, the location and use made of the different car parks are so varied that it would be unduly onerous and operationally inefficient to list jobs in this way. It was agreed that it would be better to be more specific about the principles of how they work i.e. keep up close liaison with the Rangers on all aspects of Car Park Warden work, always obtain their agreement prior to undertaking work and never undertaking any work on site for which they have not been supplied the necessary equipment or materials. These principles have been confirmed in writing to each individual.

## **6. Financial and Staffing Implications**

6.1 It is anticipated that any additional expenditure that is incurred as a result of this report will be minor and absorbed within existing budgets. Reductions in budgets are not preventing the provision of appropriate Health and Safety training or personal protective equipment.

## **7. Contribution to National Park Management Plan**

7.1 A robust and proportionate method of dealing with health and safety will ensure that staff can be assured that their working environment is well managed and safe, maximising the time available to be spent of delivering the Management Plan targets.

**8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1 The conclusions outlined in the report together with the implementation of the actions will help to further improve Health and Safety practice and ensure that the Authority can demonstrate that it is fulfilling its legal obligations.

**9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 That Members note the progress made on the Health and Safety action plan for 2015/16, and  
9.2 Approve and make any comments on the proposed plan for 2016/17.

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**Background documents to this report**

**File ref.**

1. NPA Reports, December 2013, 2014, 2015
2. FRASC Reports 2012, 2014, 2015