

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

16 November 2020

## Business Plan 6 Monthly Performance Indicators Update

### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To report back to Members on an agreed set of 12 Business Plan objectives, which provide an update on the Authority's progress since the previous report in November 2019.

### 2. Introduction

- 2.1 A proposed set of 12 'key indicators' was approved at the National Park Authority meeting in March 2017. It was agreed that these performance measures would be reported back on twice a year to FRASC to present a snapshot of Business Plan progress.
- 2.2 The Authority's current Business Plan runs to December 2020. Work is currently underway to prepare an interim Plan for the period January 2021 to March 2022. This timing will coincide with the publication of a new National Park Management Plan (in April 2022) and will ensure that the Authority's own objectives and actions (in the Business Plan) are driven by the broader long term vision and aims for the National Park (in the Management Plan)
- 2.3 An update on progress against these key indicators for the mid-point of financial year 2019/20 was presented in November 2019. The FRASC meeting in June 2020 was held virtually, with a shorter agenda than normal focusing on priority audit and finance reports. A Business Plan progress report was not presented at that meeting and an update is provided here.

### 3. For Consideration

- 3.1 The table in **Appendix 1** provides commentary and data (where available) on the 12 key indicators that were agreed. It aims to provide members with some initial insight into the effects that the Covid-19 pandemic is having on delivery of the Authority's work programmes, customer service and organisational health.

### 4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Members are asked to review the contents of the Appendix.

### 5. Financial and Staffing Implications

- 5.1 None.

### 6. Contribution to the National Park Management Plan

- 6.1 Performance reporting sets out what the Authority is achieving to contribute towards the ambitions in the National Park Management Plan and how it is performing as a public body.

7. **Legal Implications**

7.1 None arising directly from this report.

8. **Recommendation**

8.1 That Members review and comment on the attached document which provides an overview of progress since November 2019 against 12 key indicators in the Authority's Business Plan.

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## Appendix 1 – Summary of progress on key indicators since November 2019

### **Objective E1. Establish effective wildlife corridors in the National Park (Indicators updated in September 2019 with agreement to provide narrative update)**

#### **Progress update**

**Grassland Conservation:** 12 existing agreements have been maintained. Three agreements due for expiry are being renewed for a further five years.

**Ancient woodland restoration** – 145ha of agreement signed mainly Hawaby as part of Rye project. Working towards 62ha of new restoration projects this Winter. Site at Ingleby Arncliffe felled, new project for 69ha of priority habitat and 30ha of wooded conservation habitats being planned

38 ha **new broadleaved woodland** created via Woodsmith Mine S106. Further 25 agreements covering a total area of 83ha to be delivered this winter. New full time post started in September 2020

**Landscape Tree Scheme** initiated in September as part of the NPA's Rural Recovery Fund. Demand far outstripped the £10k budget.

**Turtle Dove** project extended due to impact of Covid restrictions to enable delivery of remaining objectives.

**Ryevitalise** has 12 live agreements; seven Conservation Agreements, three Conservation Woodland Agreements (covering 11 sites), and two Ancient Tree Agreements. 67 volunteers have participated, a great achievement despite Covid-19 restrictions.

**Water Environment Grant** work is focussing on; farm infrastructure improvements, Farm advice, INNS and a staff post to administer this.

**River Esk work** NYMNP Trust now the host of the CaBa fund in partnership with NYMNP. Many projects ongoing including; working with volunteers, fish surveys, INNS awareness campaign, freshwater pearl mussel work

**ERDF** – Blue Corridors – Funding application approved. Collaboration between the Rye and Esk catchments with 4 elements; Habitat improvements, easement of manmade obstacles, INNS control, Rights of way improvement and Water quality monitoring and reporting.

### **Objective E8. Propose practical solutions for wildlife, farmers and landscape in the National Park as a result of Brexit and National Policy changes.**

**Indicator** - % of the area of the National Park managed in line with conservation objectives. **Target** - % maintained or increased

#### **Progress update**

The indicator figure for 19/20 is approximately 60%, which is an apparent decrease on 61% in 18/19. However this 1% difference is not thought to be significant enough to draw conclusions as the figures are not sufficiently accurate. Any actual fluctuations will probably be due to the difference between new Countryside Stewardship agreements starting/Environmental Stewardship agreements being extended (mainly HLS) on an annual basis, and Environmental Stewardship agreements finishing.

Work is ongoing on the Test & Trials work with DEFRA with consultation ongoing with farmers and land managers across the NYMNP. Current progress with this work was reported to full Authority on 02 November 2020.

**Objective U1. Inspire more young people to understand and experience the NYM and be actively involved in its future (Strategic Priority)**

**Targets: Contacts via the Education Service - 18,000 each year by 2020**

**Satisfaction with Education Service Target - 95% or above**

**School contacts supported through targeted transport – 800 each year**

#### **Progress update**

For financial year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 targets were all exceeded. The Education Service had 24,552 contacts including youth engagement the Explorer Club, Explorer Volunteers, events and family community groups. Satisfaction with the service (via feedback surveys) was 100% and there were 4267 school contacts through targeted transport.

Between April and October this year there have been 2024 contacts with the service, no feedback forms received as yet and 203 school contacts through targeted transport.

A wide range of alternative, accessible activities have been offered as alternatives to the usual programme both during lockdown and since schools have returned. For example: **'At Home' nature club** launched on World Earth day (22<sup>nd</sup> April) with 37 activities for children to complete with their families doing daily exercise.

**Family John Muir Award** launched in July with dedicated facebook group.

All children's events cancelled but some **Ryevitalise events** were able to go ahead with Education staff assistance

**Youth Engagement** sessions have been delivered via Zoom. Also organised 2 x Young Ranger zoom sessions between 7 other National Parks and the Defra comms team who were looking for insight into tackling anti- social behaviour. Two of our young rangers were used as faces for a national campaign.

**Partnership with Kidz Konnekt** started in July to deliver a year long programme of activities for children and schools in Redcar and Cleveland - funded through the 'You've Got This' Sport England Local Delivery Pilot and brings us an income. 32 sessions delivered during the summer holidays. Also working with South Bank Primary School to improve their school grounds for wildlife and outdoor learning.

**Zoom sessions for schools** – Reimagined our assembly offer and gone online 40 bookings taken within first two weeks of September including 'virtual rock pooling'!

New **dark skies** after school activity developed and trialled.

Now registered as **approved alternative activity provider** for North Yorkshire, Stockton and York. Scarborough Pupil referral students coming out to us each week.

**Objective U2. Manage, maintain and improve public rights of way and other priority access routes in the National Park**

***Target updated September 2019: The percentage of promoted and priority routes that are easy to use by the general public – Target 85%.***

***All other routes target – 75%***

**Progress update**

2019 pilot survey of promoted and priority routes – 100%.

2020 survey of promoted and priority routes has been delayed by restrictions to volunteering due to Coronavirus. Final surveys were due to be completed in early November, but have again been delayed due to the new lockdown. Results so far indicate that the result will be below 85% - predicted 81%

Coronavirus has brought additional challenges and demands which have pulled rangers away from their usual work programmes, meaning less maintenance and improvement work has been carried out on public rights of way. Planned capital works on two easy access routes have been delayed to 2021.

All other routes – 82%

Last survey completed May 2019, next survey due May 2021

**Objective B4: Increase the profile of the North York Moors to achieve the second purpose and support the local economy.**

***Indicator: Number of visitor days spend in the National Park (Strategic Priority)***

***Target – Number of visitor days is increasing (NPMP target)***

**Progress Update**

STEAM figures for visitor days

2019 - 13,275,890

2018 – 12,838,591

2017 - 12,819,632

2016 – 12,680,818

It is difficult to predict what the figure for visitor days will look like for 2020. Latest estimates by Visit Britain suggest a 49% decrease in domestic tourism spend for 2020 although it is hard to say that a similar decline will have been experienced in the North York Moors owing to the staycation effect and attraction of outdoor spaces. Nonetheless, weak consumer sentiment, covid restrictions and the latest lock-down will all have a major bearing on spend for the year. Many businesses that were hoping to pick up some trade in the Autumn months have now lost that opportunity.

**Financial principle. Total Expenditure on grants is increased to 10% taken as a running average of the last four years' gross spend.**

***Indicator ££'s spent on third party grants for National Park purposes  
Target – 10% as a running average of the last four years gross spend.***

**Progress update**

Gross spend on third party grants is currently forecast at £620k for 2020/21. This is 7.35% of gross expenditure excluding S106 spend.

Increasing budget pressures since the start of the business plan period have resulted in a need to reduce some levels of discretionary work including the value of core grants, although we continue to increase the number of grants that we provide overall.

**Objective CR1. Provide inspiring strategic people Management support to the Authority and ensure that people are supported to enable them to deliver services in a way that makes the most of their skills**

***Indicator: Staff sickness levels***

***Target: Maximum of four days per full time equivalent (fte) per year sickness absence***

**Progress update**

In the 6 months to the end of September, sickness absence was lower than normal at less than 1 day per person. The bulk of the sickness days were as a result of one long term absentee. Underlying absence is very low and there are a variety of probable reasons including home working and fewer routine medical procedures during the spring and summer.

**Objective CR8. Ensure that the costs of Corporate Services remain at 5% or less of the Authority's gross costs**

***Indicator. Corporate and Democratic core (CDC) costs as a % of core expenditure. Target – 5% or less***

**Progress update**

2.4% at end of September – based on predicted forecast out-turn

This percentage is lower than previous years due to a reduction in the overall budget due to the Covid pandemic.

**C5. Deliver the volunteer strategy, developing a 'one team' approach and embedding volunteering in all areas of the Authority's work**

**Indicator. Number of volunteer days worked**

**Target – 23,000 volunteer days per year by 2021**

**Progress update**

2019/20 figure is 15,011

The volunteering programme lost the best part of a month's volunteering due to Covid - not just for the NPA but also the Associate Groups with whom we work.

We have been bringing volunteers back to the National Park in phases. The first phase was restricted to lone-working volunteers and those who already volunteered in family groups. We are now in Phase 2 which has brought volunteering back in groups but only up to six per group including the task leader. Volunteering is entirely up to both the line manager and the volunteer and some have more readily engaged with volunteering within the new Covid-19 guidance than others, so we are still a long way off being back to normal. We're continuing to adapt to changes in Covid guidance as they arise and also to local guidance. For example volunteers living in the Redcar, Cleveland and Teesside area were asked not to volunteer when it entered into 'Tier 2' restrictions because of local advice. All volunteering activity outdoors or on NPA premises ceased again for lockdown on 4<sup>th</sup> November.

**Objective C1. Deliver a customer focused Development Management service**

**Indicator. Timely determination of planning applications**

**Overall target: 80% of applications determined within 8 weeks**

**Individual targets**

**60% Major applications within 13/16 weeks**

**65% Minor applications within 8 weeks**

**80% Other applications within 8 weeks**

**Progress update**

Combined 87% against target of 80%  
Majors 67% against target of 60%  
Minors 76% against target of 65%  
Others 91% against target of 80%

We have delegated far more applications than usual, getting applications through faster with the emergency delegation scheme and fewer going to Virtual Committees. All targets have been met for first and second quarters of 2020/21 so good performance given extra difficulties around working remotely.

In terms of context and overall numbers we had 277 applications for Q1/Q2 2020/21, these were roughly comparable with previous years. :

|                          |         |     |
|--------------------------|---------|-----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2019/20 | 283 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2018/19 | 251 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2017/18 | 263 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2016/17 | 288 |

Figures are also available for Customer satisfaction with the planning service in 2019. 79% of those who completed the survey were satisfied with the service, against a target of 85%.

**Objective CR2. Improved delivery of excellent customer service across all of the Authority's functions**

***Indicator. Overall customer satisfaction – (use annual customer service excellence - CSE assessment)***

**Progress update**

Members previously agreed (FRASC Feb 2020) that the 2020 CSE assessment should be postponed in favour of undertaking a number of other customer service related activities, including mystery shopping, bespoke customer service training and process improvement work. C-19 has unfortunately intervened and these activities have not been undertaken. It is Officers' view that given the wide ranging changes that dealing with c-19 has necessitated, the proposed activities should be delivered as soon as practicable but recognising that this will not be before the spring/summer of 2021.

Other indicators of service delivery such as compliments/complaints number and the planning satisfaction survey indicate that very good service is still being delivered despite the c-19 constraints placed on our 'normal' activity.