

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

Public Minutes of the meeting held at The Old Vicarage, Helmsley on 1 September 2020.

Present:

Jim Bailey, Peter Berry, Malcolm Bowes, Patrick James, Shaun Moody, Caroline Patmore, Andrew Scott, Jeremy Walker,

Apologies:

David Jeffels

Officers in Attendance:

Chris France (Director of Planning), Briony Fox (Director of Conservation), Ian Nicholls (Head of Corporate Services), Tom Stephenson (External Funding Officer), Pete Williams (Head of Finance), Simon Baum (ICT Manager), Gareth Mills (Grant Thornton - Auditors), Richard Smith (Authority Solicitor), Vanessa Burgess (Committees Officer)

Copies of All Documents Considered Are In The Minute Book

Jeremy Walker, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting

30/20 Minutes

Resolved:

That the public minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2020, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

31/20 Members Interests

Members were reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interests relating to any agenda item prior to its consideration.

Jeremy Walker declared a prejudicial interest in the Authority's Rural Recovery Fund as he currently has an application in progress for funding for dry stone walling.

Andrew Scott declared a non-prejudicial interest, as NYM Railway had recently had a small grant approved.

32/20 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of each of the items of business shown in column 1 of the following table on the grounds that each involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part 1 Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 specified in column 2:-

Item No on the Agenda	Paragraph No
12	1, & 2

Resolved:

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Item 12 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 and 2.... of Part 1 Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972

33/20 **Finance Update**

Considered:

The report of the Head of Finance

Pete Williams reminded members that the report covered the period up to the end of June, but reporting was against the new (Covid impact) budget figures. Whilst there was a £433k surplus at present, the monies relate to timed projects. First quarter spend was on essential items only. Currently £63k behind on expenditure, but due to change quickly now spend is on the increase again. An additional £90k income from Car Parks.

Other points mentioned by Pete:

- Further lockdown period, budgeted for in Q4 (winter)
- Monthly revising of forecasts
- Additional costs on PPE
- Visitor Centres – still cautious re: foot fall
- Additional savings made on business rates at National Park Centres and Spout House
- Maintenance budgets have been restored, due to increased activity
- Covid Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) reduced by £44k due to staff returning to work earlier than originally expected
- External funding projects on the whole progressing well

Members commented on:

- Budget looking healthier than first feared. Important to remain cautious in second half of year due to on-going Covid situation.
- Focus should now be on spending budgets
- Concerns around potential for a year end surplus
- Could some project costs be rolled forward

Pete Williams advised members of the importance to show that spend was continuing. The Authority needed to delivery as much as it could, assisting rural recovery and suppliers. Whilst there was still uncertainty, the Authority needed to be mindful of Reserves. Some project costs could be rolled forward if required, but the Authority was keen to commit.

Action: PW to look at “Ecological window of spend”. Think about how to manage funds into next year.

Chris France reminded members of the contents of a recent fortnightly update presentation relating to rural recovery and proposed delivery. The new Kick Start

Scheme, Engagement with the Public and the Development of a Recreation Strategy (£264k).

Action: PW to update members again on the rural recovery fund at their fortnightly meeting on 22 September 2020.

Resolved: Members noted the report.

34/20 External Audit – Verbal Update

Gareth Mills, Grant Thornton Auditors, spoke to members.

- Audit started in July, the bulk of which was now complete
- Thanked the Authority's Finance team for their help, plus Briony Fox for her support regarding S106 and Ian Nicholls in relation to the Annual Governance Statement.
- National issues at present re: Pensions. Auditors raised a few queries with NYCC colleagues and the Pensions Fund Actuary. Issue doesn't affect Reserves, but there is a need for accuracy.
- Sign off expected at November NPA.
- Auditors to meet Tom Hind, the Authority's new CEO on 13 October.

Members thanked Gareth for his verbal update.

35/20 IT Update

Considered:

The report of the ICT Manager

Simon Baum updated members on the following:

- Review of Security
- Change in Password Policy
- New Telephone System
- Changes to linked e-mails
- Location of Servers
- Reviewing home office set ups for staff

Members commented on the following:

- Excellent report/IT work being undertaken by the ICT Team
- Timescales for linked e-mail changes
- Surveys re: home working, related health issues

Ian Nicholls informed members that Officers were aware of individual's home working issues and these were being looked into. The Authority had long standing arrangements re: screen use/eyesight testing.

Action: SB to initially support Malcolm Bowes with his e-mail forwarding issues, before supporting/completing work with other members by the end of 2020.

Resolved: Members noted the diverse work being carried out to support and develop the Authority's ICT by the team.
Members approved the phased removal of forwarding NYMNPA emails to other

accounts with the support of the IT Team.

36/20 **Health and Safety**

Considered:

The report of the Head of Corporate Services

Ian Nicholls updated members of the following H&S matters:

- Dramatic reduction in sickness levels, since working from home introduced
- Most National Park activities now working at near normal levels
- Provision of PPE, situation now easing. PPE not as expensive and easier to obtain
- Sutton Bank, difficulties over the last few weeks with volume of visitors

Discussion followed around part 4 of the report – the trailer near miss incident. Members were informed of the serious nature of the incident and the process of investigation being undertaken by the Authority.

- Formal investigation by D Trafford – Head of Recreation and Ranger Services
- H&S sub group meeting to discuss
- External input from Dominic Passman – H&S, NYCC
- Tags to be placed on wheel nuts of all trailers in future

A copy of the findings of the investigation will be shared with members as soon as completed.

Members commented on:

- Staff remote working, 2 days in office, 3 days working from home. Need to think more about opportunities for staff to get together, to interact safely.
- Sutton Bank – additional support to staff
- Important to check all other equipment as soon as possible

Ian Nicholls informed members that Officers were being creative re: ways of keeping staff together/connected whilst working from home. There was to be a whole team meeting with staff at Sutton Bank to discuss/work through recent issues. Regarding the near miss incident, the Authority did operate a good the go system, which included visual checks each time a vehicle was used. Action planning would include a written policy re: maintenance of equipment.

Action: IN to share findings of near miss incident report with Members

Resolved: Members supported and commented, as indicated above, on the work undertaken since the last FRASC meeting.

37/20 **Corporate Risk Register**

Considered:

The report of the Head of Corporate Services

Ian Nicholls informed members that, due to the recent Covid situation, a shift in risk levels had taken place over the last 4-5 months.

Referring to his report, Ian highlighted the suggested changes in risk and the reasoning for each.

Members commented on:

- The need to think about possible new risks, such as the changing nature of the demographic of visitors to the NYMNP
- Political issues such as Local Govt re-organisation, threats to Planning powers
- Possible new tensions created by climate change, more visitors to the Park, changes to Public Transport and the general health and wellbeing of people, post Covid
- Policy re: Covid cases at work

Chris France spoke to members about the recent factors regarding visitor issues at Sutton Bank. Post Covid lockdown, visitor numbers at Sutton Bank had seen a dramatic increase. Whilst there was now increased capacity and attractions available at Sutton Bank, some of the infrastructure hadn't coped too well such as toilet facilities and car parking ticket machine, though issues with the ticket machines will be resolved once new card payment machines are installed.

Action: Officers to further discuss Devolution/planning powers

Action: IN to update CRR for November FRASC

Resolved: Members commented, as indicated above, on Officers' proposals to amend the risk categories as outlined in part 3 of the report.

38/20 Update on the Local Government Ethical Standards Review carried out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life

Considered:

The report of the Authority's Solicitor

Action: Officers to continue to monitor and report back to FRASC in 2021

Resolved: Members noted the present position.

39/20 External Funding

Considered:

The report of the External Funding Officer

To accompany his report, Tom Stephenson gave members a brief verbal update on the following:

- There has been no change to the income forecast since the last External funding update
- Final application had now been submitted for the Blue Corridors Project. Should be notified re: outcome within the next month

- Small activity re: Whitby to Staithes Cycling – now out to tender
- The Trust have been successful in securing Esk funding
- Drop in expected income for 2021/22, hopefully there will be opportunities to try and fill the gap.
- Lotteries Green Recovery Challenge – Briony Fox and Conservation dept are currently working up ideas such as Pond restoration work, a bridging scheme for Birds on the Edge and a Woodland Conservation Project.

Members commented on the following:

- Good to have a bridging scheme for the Birds on the Edge project, to bolster the work already done on Turtle Doves
- Issues with Heather Moorland/Heather Beetle – Speaking to Natural England
- ELMS – test & trials, flexible ELMS objectives may be able to support some local projects
- Opportunity to utilise hard data from Health and Wellbeing work, to support future funding bids.

Action: TS to look into ELMS projects – other opportunities

<p>Resolved: Members noted the contents of the report and agreed the current work being done to secure external funding.</p>

A copy of all presentations can be found in the relevant e-file

..... (Chair)
16 November 2020

**Public Summary of Items considered "in private"
at the meeting of the Finance, Risk, Audit and Standards Committee
on 1 September 2020**

Complaints and Compliments Update

Members were updated on the details of the complaints and compliments received by the Authority in Quarter 4 of 2019-20 and Quarter 1 of 2020-21.