

# National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 9

## Annual Operational Plan Progress Report

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### *Paper for information*

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper reports on our year-to-date progress against the Annual Operational Plan (AOP) 2019-20. Appendix 1 details how each deliverable within the AOP is progressing.
- 1.2 The most recent report was in June 2019. Since that time, the majority of items remain on track, but increasingly items are falling behind schedule or are at risk, as explained further in this paper.

#### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

#### 3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and Our 5-Year Plan

- 3.1. The AOP objectives are aligned with the 2018-2023 National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) and relevant priorities from Our 5 Year (Corporate) Plan. The AOP itself is a key part of ensuring we have delivery plans in place over the period of the NPPP and Our 5-Year Plan.

#### 4. Current Status

- 4.1. Of the 15 AOP Priorities (Section 1 of Appendix 1):
  - 1 is complete
  - 9 are on track
  - 4 are behind schedule
  - 1 is at risk
  - 0 are cancelled/postponed
- 4.2. Of the 84 AOP Detailed Activities (Section 2 of Appendix 1):
  - 6 are complete
  - 58 are on track
  - 15 are behind schedule
  - 3 are at risk
  - 2 are cancelled/postponed
- 4.3. Note that the AOP lists some items as both Priorities and Detailed Activities, so there is some overlap between sections 1 and 2.

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### 5. Discussion

- 5.1. While the majority of items are on track for delivery, there are now more items behind schedule or at risk than at the time of our June 2019 report. There are diverse reasons for the deterioration in delivery, including external factors, unforeseen project specific challenges, and internal staff capacity.
- 5.2. In particular, this year's budget included a £200k staff savings target, which we have been managing by carrying vacancies as they arise. We now forecast that we will achieve £364k in staff savings this year. We are using the additional savings to fund cost increases elsewhere (see Financial Report agenda item).
- 5.3. These staff savings have had an impact on our capacity to deliver. For example, some income generation, conservation, recreation, and tourism projects have all suffered from reduced staff capacity. Nonetheless, we continue to progress these projects on a slower track, or are taking corrective action to ensure they are delivered.
- 5.4. The following items are at risk and have increased likelihood of non-delivery:
  - Delivery of Callander's Landscape projects: Outstanding issues remain despite proactive management of this complex and ambitious partnership project. This includes multiple project work streams on legal/landowner agreements, future maintenance and management plans set against tight funding deadlines place the Falls of Leny project at significant risk. These are being reported to and discussed at the Delivery Group.
  - Development of four sites for peatland restoration: Six site plans are ready for implementation (with a further six in prep) of which only one will be able to proceed this year due to external delays in SNH funding, landowner permissions and contractor availability.
  - Development of options for strategic investment to create income: We are prioritising the development of our estates management system, due for delivery this year, which will help inform strategic investment options.
- 5.5. Staff continue to work hard to achieve the deliverables within the AOP and in many cases are going above and beyond to bring them to completion. In its budget and resourcing discussions, the Executive continues to consider the trade-offs associated with different options. On a day to day basis we are working to ensure staff are prioritising the most critical items while maintaining an appropriate and healthy work-life balance.
- 5.6. As we progress towards budget discussions for 2020/21, we will need to carefully consider how we continue to manage any budget pressures. This includes

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continuing to ensure the commitments we make will be achievable and that we take into account the impacts of any active management approaches.

### 6. Conclusion

Overall, we continue to make good progress on this year's Annual Operational Plan, though some items are slipping off track. Staff capacity is being maximised, and the impacts of the current budget constraints on delivery are starting to be seen.

**Author:** Pete Wightman, Director of Corporate Services

**Executive Sponsor:** Gordon Watson, CEO