

National Park Authority

Audit & Risk Committee Meeting

Agenda Item 9



Annual Report on Best Value 2019/20

Paper for approval

1. Purpose

To present the Annual Report on Best Value for 2019/20.

2. Recommendation

Members are asked to review and approve this report which demonstrates compliance with the Best Value Guidance for Accountable Officers.

3. Contribution to Our 5 Year Plan

Best Value is an enabler to achieving the delivery of Our 5 Year Plan by ensuring that we maximise the value we achieve from our resources.

3. Introduction

Under our Best Value policy (see Appendix), it is the role of the Audit & Risk Committee to review and approve the Annual Report on Best Value to ensure compliance and report as needed to the Board. The report is usually presented at the June Audit & Risk Committee meeting but was delayed this year due to the resource capacity constraints arising from COVID-19.

4. Annual Report on Best Value 2019/20

The main monitoring tool for continuous improvement is the reporting against Annual Operational Plan targets presented to the Board.

The majority of the deliverables within the Annual Operational Plan were achieved. Items that were postponed or not delivered arose from external factors, unforeseen project challenges, and internal staff capacity. In addition, the emergence of COVID-19 late in the year affected our delivery particularly in March 2020. The Executive and Operational Managers continually reprioritised work in light of these challenges to achieve the most effective use of our resources.

The following table summarises some of the achievements in relation to each Best Value theme.

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| <p>Vision & Leadership</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership event held in November 2019 to review progress and call to action on the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP), hosted by us and attended by over 90 individuals representing 43 partner and community organisations. Achieved One Star rating in Best Companies staff survey, and listed in The Times' Top-100 Not For Profit Companies. Budget and Annual Operational Plan for 2020/21 approved by Board, linked to key priorities for the year |
| <p>Effective Partnerships</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress on six The Mountains and The People path improvement projects, and work to agree legacy arrangements Callander's Landscape includes 15 partners from across the community, public sector, voluntary organisations, local businesses and landowners who will work together to deliver 19 projects in and around Callander Providing funding to groups and delivery bodies within the National Park through our grant schemes Working in partnership with Police Scotland, Project Ironworks continues to reduce anti-social and irresponsible behaviour Partner working with Cairngorms National Park Authority in relation to a number of back office and procured services and systems and in sharing and learning from good practice in policy and initiatives development. The Environment and Economy portfolio of Scottish Public Bodies has a valuable Leadership Group to support effective partnership working and share good practice within the portfolio. Development of a draft MOU with partners for the management of the West Highland Way Working in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council to improve litter management and grounds maintenance at visitor sites along the A82 Through National Park Partnerships LLP, Columbia Sportswear continued to provide our staff uniforms. In addition, CLIF Energy Bars provided funding to support the Cowal River Repair Project Vango are our official camping partner to promote responsible camping, and also enable more people from disadvantaged backgrounds to enjoy camping in the National Park. |
| <p>Governance & Accountability</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third annual update on implementation of camping byelaws provided to Ministers, and Three-Year report approved by Board in March 2020. Convener re-appointment confirmed for further three-year term. Updated terms of reference for the Audit and Risk Committee to reflect latest Scottish Government guidance |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful consultations carried out on Core Paths Plan, Trees & Woodlands Strategy, and Outdoor Recreation Plan. commenced |
| Use of Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful use of 'pop-ups' as short term tenanted arrangements on our sites. • Salary savings of £360k achieved through vacancy management • 8,865 Volunteer Ranger visitor engagement hours delivered, which is our highest ever. • Continued focus on using limited resources to leverage other significant levels of funding; Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund (Callander's Landscape), LEADER (West Highland Way). • Delivery of only a small underspend (£75k) despite significant year-end expenditure challenges due to the timing of COVID-19 onset • Procurement of a cloud-based estates management tool which will become operational in 2020/21 |
| Performance Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive feedback received from visitors who said they would be likely to recommend camping at a campsite or permit area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 97% at Loch Chon campsite ○ 96% at Loch Achray campsite ○ 92% at permit areas • Reduction in number of reported byelaw contraventions on Loch Lomond and under the camping byelaws. • 79% of invoices paid within 10 days of receipt; 99% paid within 30 days. • 90% of complaints responded to within time limits • 96% of information requests and reviews responded to within time limits |
| Sustainability <i>(cross-cutting theme)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees and Woodland Strategy developed and approved by Board • 7,653 practical conservation volunteer hours delivered, an increase of over 600 • £21,000 in grants resulting in nearly 2000 trees planted, in over 9 locations • Consultation input to circa 450ha of woodland creation schemes for approval by Scottish Forestry. • 12% reduction in emissions, year-on-year • Increase in electric or hybrid vehicles, now covering 37% of our fleet • Revised ICT policy includes a specific focus on sustainability • 50% of Board members now receiving electronic papers only |
| Equality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of four Junior Ranger programmes |

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| <i>(cross-cutting theme)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• #iwill Pledge taken by Board to support inclusion of young people in decision making in the National Park• Representation of Youth Committee at National Park Board meetings and other events• Improved the accessibility of the Callander's Landscape website• Volunteer Equality and Diversity Survey completed showing an increase in diversity, in particular an increase in female and young volunteers. |
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5. Conclusion

We continued to demonstrate our compliance with the Best Value Guidance during 2019/20.

Author: Pete Wightman, Director of Corporate Services
Executive Sponsor: Gordon Watson, CEO/Accountable Officer