



# Annual Report on Best Value 2021/22

## Agenda Item 12

### National Park Authority Audit and Risk Committee

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Paper for approval

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#### 1. Purpose

1.1. To present the Annual Report on Best Value for 2021/22.

#### 2. Recommendation(s)

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

#### 3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and/or Our 5-year Plan

3.1. 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

#### 4. Introduction

4.1. Under our Best Value policy (**see Appendix 1**), 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.

#### 5. Annual Report on Best Value 2021/22

5.1. The main monitoring tool for continuous improvement is the reporting against Annual Operational Plan presented to the Board. The final progress report for 2021/22 will be discussed at the June 2022 Board meeting.

- 5.2. The majority of the deliverables within the Annual Operational Plan were achieved. A small number of deliverables were delayed for three reasons;
- We proactively delayed a deliverable to enable another strategic priority to progress;
  - Delays with recruitment of key roles to enable progress to occur on certain deliverables; or,
  - We experienced challenges beyond our control, such as material changes in the procurement market and increased cost of materials.
- 5.3. Overall, this represents a high level of success. The Executive Team are proud of what teams throughout the organisation were able to accomplish over the year, making significant progress on the key priorities of the plan such as climate, nature, visitor management, and reopening of facilities following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 5.4. The following table summarises some of the achievements in relation to each Best Value theme.

<p>Vision &amp; Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our Future Nature vision was set out and agreed by our Board, explaining how we will reverse the decline in nature in the National Park and achieve large scale nature restoration</li> <li>• Members of our Youth Committee, Board, and staff, implemented a programme of activity around COP26 in Glasgow, demonstrating our commitment to tackling the climate emergency and highlighting the potential that National Parks and protected landscapes can contribute globally.</li> <li>• Continued to lead the National Park Safe Recovery Action Group, in partnership with other public bodies, NGOs, communities, businesses and landowners</li> <li>• Engaged with and advised a range of national organisations and groups to help develop policies, guidance and support. CEO sits on the national Visitor Management Strategy Steering Group</li> <li>• Smooth transition into a new vision for how we work post-pandemic. This has enabled delivery alongside flexibility and work-life balance.</li> <li>• One of the first NDPBs to move to a 35-hour working week in line with Scottish Government guidance.</li> <li>• With additional Visitor Management funding, an uplift in Grant-in-Aid was achieved for the second consecutive year based on National Park Authority's track record on delivery and reputation with Scottish Government and other stakeholders</li> </ul>
<p>Effective Partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built on the success of our Joint Visitor Management Response Plan with our partners to co-ordinate facilities reopening, traffic management, visitor management</li> </ul>

	<p>(including enforcement) and communications to visitors and communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worked with the Countryside Trust and Community Partnership to move to a new and sustainable model for us to work with local partners on project delivery</li> <li>• Callander’s Landscape includes 15 partners from across the community, public sector, voluntary organisations, local businesses and landowners working together to deliver projects in and around Callander</li> <li>• Providing funding to groups and delivery bodies within the National Park through our grant schemes with a focus on green recovery</li> <li>• Partner working with Cairngorms National Park Authority in relation to several back office and procured services and systems and in sharing and learning from good practice in policy and initiatives development.</li> <li>• We continue to subscribe to National Parks Partnerships (CEO chairs) which has delivered funding from commercial sources. This has generated income and project support and is innovating on green finance which may benefit nature projects in due course.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<p>Governance &amp; Accountability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued to review temporary governance arrangements in place to response to the needs of the pandemic, including transitioning back to in person meetings</li> <li>• Developed approach to hybrid meetings for Board and Committees – technological upgrades to HQ began in 2021/22</li> <li>• Developed our Risk Management Framework, with clear guidance around managing organisational risks</li> <li>• Our Futures Group focused on two key strategic areas – sustainable transport and visitor infrastructure - to consider how they could be addressed by work undertaken within the National Park</li> <li>• One additional Board Member inducted</li> <li>• Updated our staff register of interest policy to enable more efficient identification and management of interests.</li> </ul>
<p>Use of Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over 5000 volunteer hours delivered</li> <li>• Continued focus on leveraging other significant levels of funding, for example Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, Callander’s Landscape, the Countryside Trust, and Regional Land Use Partnerships.</li> <li>• Reduced the burden of reporting for projects within the organisation whilst increasing oversight, saving over 40 days staff time per year</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilised external consultants to enable us to develop our Place Programme at speed whilst developing detailed plans for individual sites across the National Park – this has potential to leverage additional income</li> <li>• Hybrid approach to working means we have been able to attract a wide range of high-quality candidates to roles. We have also increased our staff numbers without new investment in office/desk space.</li> </ul>
Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in 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"> <li>▪ 99% at Loch Chon campsite</li> <li>▪ 97% at Loch Achray campsite</li> <li>▪ 93% at permit areas</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 91% of complaints responded to within time limits – an increase of 9% on 2020/</li> <li>• 98% of information requests and reviews responded to within time limits</li> </ul>
Sustainability (cross-cutting theme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Mission Zero year 1 presented to National Park Board, outlining progress towards our 2030 net zero target.</li> <li>• We have achieved a 15% reduction from the 2018/19 baseline year, however the majority of this will be associated with restricted operations through the pandemic.</li> <li>• Delivery of Climate literacy training for 24 staff in partnership with Keep Scotland Beautiful</li> <li>• Engagement with National Parks UK project with Small World Consulting to map a net zero baseline for each National Park.</li> <li>• Over £37,000 in grants resulting in over 3700 trees planted, in 9 locations</li> <li>• All Board and Committee papers remain electronic only</li> <li>• Reduction in IT infrastructure including our servers and printer fleet leading to reduced energy needs.</li> </ul>
Equality (cross-cutting theme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a Board Shadowing opportunity for an individual from a minority ethnic background, with the view to gaining valuable expertise and insight from them across our operations, as well as supporting the development of additional talent available for appointments to public bodies.</li> <li>• Published our Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming report</li> <li>• Continue to be accredited as a Scottish Living Wage employer</li> <li>• Established a Board Equality and Diversity Plan, which sees us taking positive action to increase female representation on our Board</li> </ul>

## 6. Appendices

### 6.1. Appendix 1 – Best Value Policy.

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