



Annual Report on Best Value 2022/23

Agenda Item 11

National Park Authority Audit and Risk Committee

Tuesday 6th June 2022

Paper for approval

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1. Purpose

1.1. To present the Annual Report on Best Value for 2022/23.

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.

4.2. Please note that as per our Corporate Policy Review schedule, the Best Value Policy will be updated in 2023/24.

5. Annual Report on Best Value 2022/23

- 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 2022/23 will be discussed at the June 2023 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;
 - 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 and visitor management.
- 5.4. The following table summarises some of the achievements in relation to each Best Value theme.

<p>Vision & Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a new vision for the future of the National Park and published our draft National Park Partnership Plan 2024-2029, which is currently out for consultation • Launched our Future Nature route map, with key stakeholders. • Active member of NatureScot's stakeholder advisory group for Scotland's new National Park. • Continued to lead the National Park Safe Recovery Action Group, in partnership with other public bodies, NGOs, communities, businesses and landowners. • Engaged with and advised a range of national organisations and groups to help develop policies, guidance and support.
<p>Effective Partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build on the success of our Joint Visitor Management Response Plan with our partners to co-ordinate facilities reopening, traffic management, visitor management (including enforcement) and communications to visitors and communities. • Establishment of the Future Nature Steering group to support the work of our Future Nature programme. • Developed a partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland to enable improvement works to be undertaken at Ben Venue car park. • Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Studies, shared with partners, have enabled Argyll and Bute Council to leverage funding for improvements at their site in Arrochar. • 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing funding to groups and delivery bodies within the National Park through our grant schemes with a focus on green recovery • 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. • We continue to subscribe to National Parks Partnerships (CEO is the lead UK National Park Authority CEO on the Board) 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. • 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.
Governance & Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed technological upgrades at Carrochan to enable hybrid meetings – this has enabled external auditors and staff to dial in to Board Meetings where they otherwise would not have been able to attend. • All new Board Members undertook their induction, alongside a wider programme of Board training. • Reviewed our Staff Register of Interest, as per the Staff Register of Interest Policy, and provided reminders in relation to Gifts and Hospitality to all staff.
Use of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6689 volunteer hours delivered. • Continued focus on leveraging other significant levels of funding, for example Nature Restoration Fund, Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, Sustrans, Callander’s Landscape, and Regional Land Use Partnerships. • 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. • 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.
Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70% of the deliverables within the Annual Operational Plan have been achieved, with a further 25% being partially achieved by year end. • 6% increase in response to our customer survey which is sent to campers who stay in National Park campsites or permit areas • Positive feedback from visitors staying in campsites or permit areas remains high, with the below figures representing the number of people likely to recommend staying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 99% at Loch Chon campsite (97% in 2021/22)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 97% at Loch Achray campsite (97% in 2021/22) ▪ 89% at permit areas (93% in 2021/22) • 92% of complaints responded to within time limits – an increase of 1% on 2021/22
Sustainability (cross-cutting theme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Mission Zero year 2 presented to National Park Board, outlining progress towards our 2030 net zero target. • Successful in securing £1.1m in additional funding from the Scottish Government Energy Efficiency Grant Scheme to assist with renewable technologies in 2023/24 • Undertook significant upgrades at Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway and Balmaha Visitors Centre to implement air source heat pumps and photovoltaic panels and tiles. • Engagement with National Parks UK project with Small World Consulting resulting in a net zero baseline for each National Park. • Over £14,000 in grants resulting in over 1900 trees planted, in 6 locations • All Board and Committee papers remain electronic only, except where there is an accessibility requirement to provide alternative formats. • Reduction in printers at Carrochan.
Equality (cross-cutting theme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new pilot one-year Board position to work closely with us to improve representation of ethnic minorities in the outdoors sector and to help the organisation better engage with ethnic communities • Published our Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming progress report • Continue to be accredited as a Scottish Living Wage employer • Trailed a camping loan kit scheme with The Kurdish Women Community Group, made up of refugees and asylum-seeking women based in Glasgow. Women and their children camped (many for the first time) for two nights at the National Park Campsite at Loch Achray supported by National Park Volunteer and Campsite Rangers. • Undertook an internship via Inclusion Scotland’s “We Can Work” programme

6. Appendices

6.1. Appendix 1 – Best Value Policy.

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