



Annual Report on Best Value 2023/24

Agenda Item 10

National Park Authority Audit and Risk Committee

Tuesday 4th June 2024

Paper for approval

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1. Purpose

1.1. To present the Annual Report on Best Value for 2023/24.

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 2023/24

- 5.1. The main monitoring tool for continuous improvement is the reporting against Annual Operational Plan presented to the Board on a quarterly basis. The final progress report for 2023/24 will be discussed at the June 2024 Board meeting.
- 5.2. The majority of the deliverables within the Annual Operational Plan were achieved and the Executive Team are proud of what teams throughout the organisation were able to accomplish over the year, making significant progress on the key themes of the Annual Operational Plan: Tackling the twin challenges of the global climate emergency and nature crisis; Promoting sustainable low carbon destinations with people, places and communities at their heart; and Developing the plans, people and processes to support the National Park Authority's next chapter.
- 5.3. The following table frames some of the achievements of the Annual Operational Plan and 'business as usual' work in relation to each Best Value theme:

<p>Vision & Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presented and had approved at Board and Ministerial level, our 2024-2029 National Park Partnership Plan, which sets a bold and ambitious strategic direction for the National Park as a place. • Established the Future Nature programme reporting and monitoring. • Published our Herbivore Statement and expanded our delivery of the Peatland Action programme. • 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"> • Supported communities in the establishment of Local Place Plans. • Continued the development of a National Park Nature Network. • 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. • 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. • Actively engaged with key Scottish Government initiative on public sector reform

<p>Governance & Accountability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully appointed a new ministerial appointee to the Board and a change in nominated Member from Stirling Council to ensure the Board has a full complement of members. • All new Board Members undertook an induction programme, alongside a wider programme of Board training for all Members. • 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.
<p>Use of Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued focus on leveraging significant funding beyond grant-in-aid, including Nature Restoration Fund, 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.
<p>Performance Management</p>	<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. • 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"> ▪ 97% at Loch Chon campsite ▪ 94% at Loch Achray campsite ▪ 90% at permit areas
<p>Sustainability <i>(cross-cutting theme)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of PV tiles/panels at HQ building to increase our use of solar energy. • Installed a new heating system powered by Air Source Heat Pumps in HQ, removing the biomass boiler and natural gas back up system. • Mission Zero update presented to National Park Board, outlining progress towards our 2030 net zero target. • All Board and Committee papers remain electronic only, except where there is an accessibility requirement to provide alternative formats.

<p>Equality (<i>cross-cutting theme</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking part in the UK Government’s Boardroom Apprentice programme to offer experience of Board membership to a underrepresented groups. • Concluded our pilot project 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. • Continue to be accredited as a Scottish Living Wage employer
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6. Appendices

6.1. Appendix 1 – Best Value Policy.

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