Draft Minutes of Meeting held at 2.00pm on Tuesday 2 June 2026, John Muir Suite, Balloch

National Park Authority Audit and Risk Committee

Paper for information

Present
Ronnie Erskine (RE) (Chair)
David Mackie (DM)
Maurice Corry (MC)
Martin Earl (ME)
Christopher Spray (CS)

In Attendance
Gordon Watson (GW) (Chief Executive)
Jane Kemp (JK) (Head of Governance and Performance)
Douglas Smith (DSm) (Corporate Performance Manager)
Deborah Spratt (DS) (Committee Clerk)
Rachel King (Azets)
Tom Reid (TR), Forvis Mazars
Helen Bowman (HB) (Solicitor, Business Improvement) (Observer)
Bob Cook (BC) (Development Manager) (Agenda Item 9 – Planning Authority)
Alison Williamson (AW) (Senior Development Manager) (Agenda Item 9 – Planning Authority)

Apologies
None

Items and Actions
1. Welcome and Apologies The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee. The Chair ran through a few procedural points and welcome was extended to any members of the public who may be listening. There were no apologies and no members of the public attending in person. Members agreed under s50A (4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (as amended) to hold confidential items in closed session in accordance with the motion.
2. Declarations of Interest There were no Declarations of Interest from Committee Members.

3. **Minutes of meeting held on 3 March 2026**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2026 were proposed by DM, seconded by MC and approved by Members present.

4. **Matters Arising**

DSm presented the Matters Arising noting that two are complete with the other for discussion under item 6 of the Agenda.

DECISION: Members were happy to note the report.

5. **External Audit Update**

TR presented Forvis Mazars paper which provides an update on progress in delivering their external audit responsibilities for Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority. Forvis Mazars plan to complete the 2025/26 audit and present the draft Annual Audit Report to the Audit and Risk Committee scheduled for 1 September 2026.

TR advised that fieldwork is due to start next week and will take place June through July.

TR referred to the publications in the report and would be happy to share these more widely across the Board.

A question was asked about what we can do / investigate if there was something within the publications that showed an action. In response, JK agreed to take an action to check (in particular), the Climate Change publication against the Corporate Risk Register and will report back to the September meeting of the Committee.

ACTION:

1. JK will check the Audit Scotland Publication: 'Transforming the approach to climate change: Lessons from public audit' against the Corporate Risk Register and will report back to the September meeting of the Committee.

DECISION: Members were happy to note the report.

6. **External Auditor's request to those charged with Governance 2025/26**

DSm presented the Authority's draft response to the External Auditors in respect of the request to Management for details of processes and arrangements in respect of preventing fraud in the annual accounts, compliance with laws and regulations, litigation and claims, and going concern for year ended 31 March 2026.

In response to Mazars request for a formal response from Audit and Risk Committee members, the following response is provided and minuted here:

a. Has the Committee knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud during the period 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026? **NO**
b. Has the Committee any suspicion that fraud may be occurring within the organisation? **NO**
c. Is the Committee satisfied that internal controls, including segregation of duties, exist and work effectively? **YES**
d. Is the Committee satisfied that staff are encouraged to report their concerns about fraud, and the types of concerns they are expected to report? **YES**
e. Is the Committee aware of any related party relationships or transactions that could give rise to instances of fraud? **NO**
f. Is the Committee aware of any entries made in the accounting records of the organisation that it believes or suspects are false or intentionally misleading? **NO**
g. Is the Committee aware of any organisational, or management pressure to meet financial or operating targets? **NO**

Members provided the following additional response to the questions in Mazars' letter dated 4 February 2026:

The Audit and Risk Committee exercises oversight of the Authority's management processes through the following:

- Requesting regular reports to ARC on a range of matters.
- Scrutinising and obtaining assurance from management's response to the External Audit letter as set out in Appendix 3 of Agenda Item 6.
- Agreeing a plan of work with Internal Audit and liaising with them and management on a range of matters and reports as required.
- Receiving reports from External Audit and discussing relevant matters with them and management as required.
- Discussing any relevant issues in confidential sessions with External and Internal Audit at the end of ARC meetings.
- Chair and Vice-Chair discussions throughout the year with the Accountable Officer, management and finance staff as required.

DECISION: The points outlined above were noted as the Committee's response. ARC agreed to note the Management response under the same agenda item and were satisfied with the response given by Management.

7. Azets Progress Report

RK presented Azets Progress Report which provides the Audit and Risk Committee with a summary of internal audit activity since its last meeting and confirms the reviews planned for the coming quarter, identifying any changes to the annual plan.

RK advised that at the request of management, the Health and Safety review, which was due to be presented to the September 2026 meeting has been deferred until Q3 of 2026/27 as a result of staff capacity. In order to ensure that everything remained on track with delivery of the plan, it was agreed with management to undertake the Freedom of Information audit which is now complete and will be presented to the September 2026 Audit and Risk Committee instead of December 2026 as planned.

JK reassured members that there was no impact to the Health and Safety Audit being deferred as this in fact had been brought forward from the 27/28 Audit so it is just going back to its original timeline. JK thanked DSm and his team for completing the Freedom of Information audit within two weeks.

DECISION: Members were happy to approve the change to the Audit timetable and noted the report. Members look forward to receiving the next set of reports at the September 2026 Committee meeting:

- Freedom of Information
- Follow-up – Q2

8. Follow-up - Part 4

RK presented Azets Follow-up report (part 4).

RK confirmed that one action (6%) was completed in the period to May 2026. Eleven actions (61%) is not yet due and six actions (33%) have been assessed as partially complete.

DECISION: Members were happy to note the progress.

9. Planning Authority

Bob Cook, Development Manager and Alison Williamson, Senior Development Manager joined the meeting.

RK presented Azets Planning Authority report and noted a number of good practice areas along with the ten improvement actions.

BC added that this was a very positive process and was happy to note the evidence of good practice. All recommendations have been accepted and the team will be working to put these in place. In relation to the Enforcement

Charter, BC confirmed that this is a statutory document which is required to be updated every two years. This has been picked up as an action in the recommendations and is currently being reviewed.

CS commented that he was very assured by the report and was encouraged by the speed of the actions.

ACTION: DSm to share the Planning Authority Audit with the Chair of Planning and Access Committee for dissemination to Members.

DECISION: Members were assured and happy to note the report.

10. Annual Report 2025/26

RK presented Azets Annual Report on behalf of Stephanie Hume who was unable to attend the meeting. The Annual Report summarises their conclusions and key findings from the internal audit work undertaken during the year ended 31 March 2026, including their overall opinion on the internal control system.

Members were pleased to note the 'reasonable assurance' opinion and RK advised that this was the most positive level of assurance that is available.

Thanks were extended to all involved.

DECISION: Members were happy to note the report.

11. Corporate Document Review

DSm presented the new Corporate Document Review previously known as the Corporate Policy Review. DSm reported that operational 'Policies' have been consolidated and rationalised so that the procedures, process and guidance (which in some cases have been named 'policies' previously) sit underneath them. The Audit and Risk Committee will only now receive status updates on the operational policy grouping, as per the new Operational Policy Review Schedule which can be viewed at Appendix 1 of the paper. This new format shows a reduction to 18 from 73 policies and highlights when the policy requires to be reviewed. The schedule at Appendix 1 of the paper details the 73 documents previously listed as 'policies' under the process being replaced.

A progress report will be provided to the Committee in June 2027, outlining the further refinement of the process and progress made.

DECISION: Members were happy to **approve** the new approach.

12. Risk Management Framework

DSm presented the updated Risk Management Framework for the National Park Authority following the approval of the update Risk Appetite Statement by the Board in March 2026. DSm advised that the document shows in highlighted text the areas that have been updated.

ACTION: It was noted that on page 131 of the PDF / point 11.4 - trigger point needs amended to 10 to 16.

DECISION: Members were happy to approve the adoption of the updated Risk Management Framework.

13. Draft Governance Statement

DSm presented the proposed Governance Statement on internal control which is required as part of the Annual Accounts statements under the Government Financial Reporting Manual.

DSm outlined the main changes from the 2024/25 Governance Statement as follows:

- Update to reflect the number of Committee meetings;
- The outcomes from the Board and its Committees;
- Details of the provider of internal audit services and the areas of internal audit review;
- Mention of the Board's approval of the revised Risk Appetite Statement
- Mention of the Accountable Officer's decision to approve spending at Falls of Falloch and Tarbet Café & Toilet under the Accountable Officer Spend Control process.
- Update to the data security section to reflect the work carried out during the year.

ACTION: DSm to update section three of the Governance Statement under the 'Futures Group' to highlight that staff and externally invited individuals also joined these meetings.

DECISION: Members were content with the report and confirmed the appropriateness of assertions made in the draft Governance Statement. Members noted that final wording may change slightly as part of the accounts finalisation process and that the sections included in red text will be updated after these are completed.

14. Annual Report on Best Value 2025/26

DSm presented the Annual Report on Best Value for 2025/26 and highlighted that more focused work is planned for Best Value during 2026/2027. This will include:

- reviewing and updating the Best Value Policy;
- making the link between our AOP actions and the Best Value themes more transparent; and
- refreshing our processes which support continuous improvement.

CS noted that it would be more beneficial to show figures rather than percentages.

DECISION: Members were happy to **approve** the report and note the work undertaken towards a revised approach for 2026/27.

15. Any Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

16. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 1 September 2026.

Signed

Ronnie Erskine, Chair