National Park Authorities Performance Assessment

Key Lines of Enquiry
for corporate assessment of National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority

Version 2.1

May 2005

GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF USE OF KEY LINES OF ENQUIRY

These key lines of enquiry have been developed to provide a common basis for the assessment of the National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority. They set out a structured approach to the more important issues to be considered and provide the basis for both the self assessment to be conducted by individual authorities and the performance assessment to be conducted by SOLACE Enterprises on behalf of the National Parks Authority and DEFRA.

Diversity and equality is an inherent part of the key lines of enquiry and is to be included as an implicit consideration throughout the themes.

Corporate assessment Key Lines of Enquiry

1. What is the authority trying to achieve?

THEMES AND KEY QUESTIONS	INSPECTION FOCUS	AN AUTHORITY THAT IS CLEAR ABOUT WHAT IT IS TRYING TO DO	AN AUTHORITY THAT IS UNCLEAR ABOUT WHAT IT IS TRYING TO DO
1 QUALITY OF VISION 1.1 Does the authority have a vision for the National Park that translates the purposes into a specific set of ambitions?	Evidence of ambitions (e.g. over a five to twenty year period) for :- • Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park and • Improving the level of understanding and enjoyment of the National Park's special qualities. • (In the case of the Broads Authority) protecting the interests of navigation	The authority has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to ensure that the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park are conserved or enhanced for future generations. There is a clear set of ambitions about how understanding and enjoyment of the National Park and its special qualities will be promoted. There is also a clear understanding of the socio –economic conditions for people living and working within the National Parks boundaries and how the ambitions for the National Park Authority fit with the wider ambitions for the area (e.g. as set out in the Local Community Strategies)	The authority is unclear about the scale of the problems and opportunities the National Park area is facing and how its own services and those of other stakeholders could contribute. There is little interest in the broader issues which relate to the sub-regional or regional level. The authority has not developed an overall vision or ambitions for the National Park, or it has vague or underdeveloped aspirations with few identifiable linkages to the work of partners.
1.2 How realistic and robust is this vision?	Extent to which the ambitions are: • **Realistic -** reflect the scale of the problems national, regional and local stakeholders are facing, plus the opportunities for the park area ensuring these are achievable within local constraints. • **Robust** – as shown by clarity around sustainable outcomes and long-term targets.	The authority has developed its ambitions with other stakeholders (national and local) and with communities and plays an appropriate role in the development of the Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Strategies. The ambitions are clear, focused and realistic, identifying what long-term sustainable outcomes the authority and others are seeking to achieve. The authority has a clear long-term vision of	The authority has little idea about what it and other stakeholders are trying to achieve and / or is unrealistic about what they can achieve. The ambitions are narrowly focused and appear to have no regard to the ambitions of other stakeholders. The authority pays little regard to sustainable development principles and objectives within its

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1.3 Is this vision integrated with the work and vision of other partner organisations at a national, regional and local level?	• Extent to which the ambitions are sustainable for future generations. • Extent to which the ambitions have been determined by working with partners, communities, service users and visitors**.** • Extent to which the ambitions are supported by or give support to the work of other appropriate bodies and organisations	how sustainable development links to National Park purposes and the duty to foster social and economic wellbeing within the National Park area. There is active, visible and effective management and leadership, recognised by staff, members, partners and stakeholders. Members, senior managers, staff and partners share a common purpose, and are enthusiastic about achieving the overall ambitions which have been set.	forward planning and priority setting. Leadership and management within the authority are weak and ineffective. There are conflicting or unco-ordinated views in the authority on what needs to be done.
2 QUALITY OF THE AUTHORITY'S PLANS 2.1 Does the authority have robust future plans and strategies, including statutory plans, for achieving their ambitions?	• Evidence of **robust plans for the future** in place with milestones to monitor progress. The extent to which these plans underpin ambitions and provide a framework for the short and long-term including annual service planning. • The **quality and suitability of the statutory plans** that the authority has in place or is developing, in relation to providing a consistent framework that supports the delivery of the authority's ambitions.	The authority has robust plans and strategies for the future which relate to its ambitions for the National Park area, they include clear milestones and set a framework for the short and long term. This includes high quality statutory plans which clearly link together and support delivery of the authority's ambitions.	The authority's formal plans are under-developed and lack clear milestones. They provide a poor framework for the short and long-term. Statutory plans are of poor quality and do not clearly link to the authority's ambitions or provide a conflicting framework for future planning.
2.2 Is the authority addressing areas where it has not achieved what it wanted to?	• Evidence of **responding to experience and learning** and building this into future plans.	Where services are not improving or ambitions not achieved, the authority understands why and what it needs to do. This is reflected in its future plans.	Where services are not improving the authority struggles to understand why and what it needs to do in the future to address this. Plans in these areas are therefore weak or do not exist.
2.3 Are staff, partners and communities effectively engaged in planning for the future?	• Extent to which **staff, partners, stakeholders' visitors and communities** are getting involved in future planning. This engagement continues to be developed for the future.	Staff, partners, stakeholders, visitors and communities have been effectively engaged in developing these plans. The authority continues to seek ways of improving its engagement with these groups in the development and delivery of ambitions and priorities.	There has been little engagement of staff, partners, stakeholders, visitors and the community in developing plans for the future and no evidence of any plans to improve engagement.

National Park Authorities Performance Assessment version 2.1

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2.4. Are national priorities, the statutory purposes and duties integrated with local social, economic and environmental issues in a sensible way?	• Future plans are effectively linked to an assessment of what **capacity** is needed to implement these, and there is evidence of the ability to make difficult decisions about what can and cannot be delivered and to use reviews to consider options for change. • Evidence of **regular reassessment of current and future priorities** and the resources and skills needed to meet these priorities, in line with changes in national and community expectations.	The authority has assessed what capacity it needs to implement its plans for the future and is taking steps to address any gaps. Members and managers are committed to continuous improvement and are willing to tackle difficult problems and to take (and stick to) tough decisions. They use reviews to consider radical options for change, where necessary.	The authority is still struggling to resolve current plans and resources and has little vision of future priorities and the impact they may have on future resource allocation. The authority has little awareness of current or future skills and capacity requirements. Members and managers are not prepared to make the changes needed to deliver improvement. They are not prepared to address difficult issues in the short term in the interest of long term improvement.
2.5 Does the authority regularly reassess its future plans and capacity in line with changing legislation, national and community priorities?	• Future plans appropriately **anticipate the diverse needs**, wants and expectations of changing legislation, population, the expectations of visitors and the environmental context for the park.	The authority's continual review of progress against priorities ensures that it is aware of where it has not achieved desired outcomes or where local and national priorities have changed. It is able to review plans in the light of this knowledge and respond effectively to the needs of the local population.	The authority's plans are not dynamic or reviewed regularly in the light of performance or changing local and national priorities.
3 SETTING PRIORITIES 3.1 Has the authority identified its priorities for improvement, and what are not its priorities for improvement?	• **Ability of the authority to set clear priorities** for improvement which underpin its ambitions, and make explicit choices about what are not its priorities.	There is clarity about which things are, and are not priorities.	The authority's intelligence is basic or poor, and it does not use the information it has to develop the priorities for the area or its services

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3.2 Is there a clear basis for these priorities?	• Extent to which the authority has **used effective consultation, dialogue and research to identify the current priorities** of its communities, visitors and the quality of the environment • Extent to which these priorities are appropriately represented and considered in the planning and delivery of all directly and indirectly provided services. • Extent to which national, local and regional priorities are integrated into the priorities for the National Park Authority.	The authority has very good intelligence gathering and community consultation mechanisms and has used this intelligence to inform the preparation of priorities for the area. The authority has a good awareness of its internal and external environment as indicated by the views of other stakeholders on the authority's understanding of the area's needs and its ability to take account of different interests and perspectives. The authority has recognised the current level of the community's and wider public interest groups capacity to engage in meaningful consultation. It has a clear strategy for capacity building and consulting about priorities, and service delivery. It has acted on the results and provided feedback to those involved. The authority's priorities respond to both national and local priorities.	The authority is poor at seeking and acting on feedback from people who use its services. It has a poor understanding of its internal and external environment as indicated by the views of other stakeholders on the authority's understanding of the needs within the National Park area. The authority has not recognised the current level of the community's wider public and interest groups capacity to engage in meaningful consultation, and has no clear strategy for consulting effectively about priorities and service delivery, and it has no plans to develop one. The authority's priorities have little regard for national priorities.
3.3 How effectively have priorities been communicated internally and externally?	• Effectiveness of external **communication** with communities, visitors, partners and stakeholders about priorities. • Effectiveness of internal communication and **ownership** of priorities.	The authority's priorities are effectively communicated internally and externally.	The authorities' priorities have not been well communicated internally and / or externally.
3.4 Has the authority sought and deployed resources to match priorities?	• Extent to which **resources are targeted against priorities** and shifted out of lower-priority areas both within and between services.	The authority has an integrated approach to deploying its resources towards its priorities. It seeks new resources to deliver in areas of high priority and does not seek new resources and / or moves existing resources away from lower priority areas.	The authority has little or no linkage between its use of resources and its priorities. The budget changes only incrementally. The authority chases new resources for lower priority areas and / or doesn't deploy resources away from things that are not priorities.

2. How has the authority set about delivering its vision?

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4 ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY 4.1. Does the authority currently have the capacity and skills it needs to achieve change?	• **Quality and capacity** of members, management and staff (both paid and voluntary), and extent to which training and development is used to develop their skills and abilities. • Management of staffing resources through the use of **HR policies and practices.** • Capacity and robustness of **staffing resources** in relation to issues such as morale, recruitment and retention, sickness absence and turnover rates, and how these have been addressed. • Existing **financial capacity** including levels of reserves and proper management of financial resources. • Adequate IT provision to meet requirements of the organisation and IEG.	The authority knows what matters most in meeting its statutory purposes and duties and concentrates its efforts in proportion to this. Its focus is on achieving impact in priority areas and it has appropriate mechanisms and tools to enable it to do this, and to continue to identify future risks and priorities. There are examples of where this sustained focus has impacted in terms of delivering positive outcomes. The authority is self-aware about capacity and has the people, skills, suppliers and capability it needs to deliver its priorities. Its own internal capacity is maximised through effective HR practice including training and development linked to priorities, and by clear strategies to address any important limitations on staffing resources such as recruitment and retention, and sickness absence. Good use is made of volunteers and their work is integrated with that of paid staff and members. The authority has the financial capacity it needs to deliver its priorities. It is willing to explore alternative methods of service delivery to maximise capacity including within the private, voluntary and community sectors, and has a robust approach to procurement.	The authority does not have a consistent view on the key issues - what needs improving or doesn't. Ability to focus is hindered by a lack of effective mechanisms and tools. There is no overarching strategy that ensures that the authority remains focussed on future risks and priorities. The authority has little self-awareness and does not know where skills and capacity gaps exist. It does not have sufficient capacity to deliver its priorities. The authority has not sought to get the best out of its own internal capacity, for example, there are weaknesses in HR practice and key issues such as sickness absence have not been dealt with effectively. The authority has financial difficulties which limit its ability to deliver its priorities. There is a reluctance to explore alternative methods of service delivery and the approach to procurement is weak.

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4.2 Does the authority stay focused on what matters?	• Evidence that the authority has been **able to sustain its focus over time to deliver against its vision** as shown by specific examples.
	• Evidence that the authority **does not get distracted** even in the face of other pressures, unexpected events, or too many initiatives.
	• Effectiveness of the **governance, mechanisms and tools** used by the authority to enable it to sustain its focus on priority areas. For example:
	  - whether agendas for senior officer and member meetings reflect the key areas of focus
	  - forward planning for member meetings
	  - use of performance information
	  - action planning arising from decisions and ability to follow up delivery against the actions
	  - structures, roles and responsibilities which reflect priorities
		Senior officers and members maintain their focus and are not distracted by minor operational matters or crises. Specific initiatives are undertaken with a clear purpose and the authority sustains its focus on these to ensure the desired impact is achieved.	Evidence shows that the authority is distracted by minor managerial problems and senior officers and members are fire-fighting with little regard for the future. The authority has a tendency to move from one initiative to another without a clear focus on what it is seeking to achieve.

4.3. Are officers and members clear about what they are responsible and accountable for?	• Quality and effectiveness of officer and member **meetings** and the **decisions** they take. Degree to which the different member structures and roles are working effectively. • Clarity about **roles and responsibilities** amongst officers and members both within the authority and externally. Mutual respect and ability to work together effectively. • Understanding of, and effective response to, new ethical framework by members and officers.	Members and officers are clear about their respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities and the boundaries between them. Level of delegation is appropriate. These are clearly set out in protocols and standing orders, and there are effective relationships between officers and members. There is effective decision-making and the authority can demonstrate that its planning decisions are both timely and add value. There is a good understanding and appropriate response to the new ethical framework by members and officers. The role of the	Member and officer roles and responsibilities are unclear. The authority does not have a set of protocols. Standing orders are either not understood or not adhered to. Members and senior managers fail to operate strategically, and routinely interfere in operational issues; there are difficulties / tensions in the relationships between members and officers. Decision-making processes are slow and fail to add value. There is a poor understanding of, and slow response to, the new ethical framework by members and officers. The Monitoring Officer

National Park Authorities Performance Assessment version 2.1

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		Monitoring Officer is exercised responsibly and with authority.	role is not taken seriously by the authority.
4.4 Is the organisation led well by managers and members?	• Effectiveness of **leadership within the organisation** to ensure ambitions are clearly understood and owned by all members and staff.	There is active, visible and effective management and leadership recognised by staff, members, partners and stakeholders. The authority gives and is seen to give clear leadership to the strategies that will deliver its vision.	Leadership and management in the authority are weak and ineffective. There is little or no effective leadership by the authority to the strategies for delivering its vision.
5. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP 5.1 Does the authority use partnerships effectively to deliver priorities?	• Attitude and approach to exploring **alternative methods of service delivery** to maximise capacity including use of procurement and IT, and the outcomes this has delivered. • Ability to work in **partnership** with the statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors to deliver **positive outcomes**.	The authority has been innovative with partners and can point to key successes from its partnership working. It has developed effective partnerships with other appropriate bodies at national, regional and local levels; ensuring resources and effort are not duplicated and are moving in the same direction. There are good working relationships with Local Authorities and Parishes.	Partners tend to focus on the difficulties of achieving outcomes with the authority. The authority can only point to things like the number of partnerships when identifying positive results, rather than real outcomes. There is little or no joined up working with other bodies at national, regional and local levels. Little consideration has been given to work with local authorities and parishes. There are problems in the relationships with other partners.
5.2 How effective is the authority in its use of partnerships and other modes of cooperative working, to help deliver its objectives?	• Effective strategic approach towards **increasing capacity** through partnership working. • Extent to which management has determined, systematically, where **collaboration** with other agencies is both possible and **likely to be productive**. • Reasonable arrangements, formalised wherever possible, for **managing each partnership engagement** with other authorities, voluntary agencies and other bodies or groups.	Strategic processes and policies in place to maximise the effectiveness of partnership working and is able to show it can influence key partners in critical areas. It coordinates its activities with partners/stakeholders. Accountabilities, roles and responsibilities are clear and attendees are able to make decisions on behalf of the authority. Has considered where barriers exist to forming partnerships and are working to overcome these	The authority works without formal agreements or systematic approach to opportunities that exist to achieve its strategic objectives. It sends contradictory or differing messages to common partners through lack of co-ordination. Cannot show that its partnership working is in line with its objectives or demonstrate useful outcomes. Partner organisations tend not to expect much input from the authority.

National Park Authorities Performance Assessment version 2.1

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5.3 How well does the authority manage its partnership working?	• Extent to which it ensures **partnerships are, and remain, worth while** • Extent that it ensures that **accountability is clear and effective relationships are sustained**. • Extent to which the authority makes sure it **gains advantage** from its partnership working.	A reasonable degree of control exists over strategic and budgetary matters. Monitoring and formal mechanisms exist for reviewing outcomes delivered through partnerships and assessing whether they continue to address the priorities of the authority. Sensible procedures in place to allow the authority to withdraw from partnerships that have come to the end of their useful lives	Few formal processes or procedures for monitoring and controlling partnership work. The authority may not know which are current or whether they are effective. There will be no agreed policies on partnership working. May not be aware it is participating in partnerships that have not achieved anything for some time. May not be able to justify why it is involved in some partnerships or explain how involvement is helping the authority to deliver its objectives.
6 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT & LEARNING 6.1 Do members and managers have the right mechanisms and information to enable them to both measure and manage performance effectively?	• Extent to which ambitions and priorities are **translated into** corporate and service plans and targets which allow members and managers to monitor achievement. • Ability of members and managers to understand the reasons for any actual or perceived differences in the quality and effectiveness of its activities (as experienced by different sections of the community) and to **manage performance** taking appropriate corrective action where necessary.	The authority's planning and performance management culture is driven by the ambitions and corporate priorities, and cascades corporate objectives and performance targets down to the service and individual level across the authority. The authority and its partners have local performance indicators for their key issues relating to the purposes for National Parks. The internal environmental performance of the authority is managed.	Planning of services is disjointed, opportunistic, reactive and not driven by the ambitions and corporate priorities. There is little or no linkage between the focus of individuals and overall achievement. There are few or no local indicators which relate to quality of life issues. Performance monitoring is weak and does not focus on priorities and outcomes. Members and managers have little or no understanding about the reasons for variations in performance and are unable to take appropriate corrective action.
6.2 Do the staff know what is expected of them and do managers know if they are achieving it?	• Evidence of a performance management system which **enables individuals to understand** their role in achievement of the authority's ambitions and priorities, and allows managers to develop and monitor their performance. • Availability of **service standards and targets** to service users and visitors. • Evidence of effective and sympathetic	Performance monitoring focuses on priorities and outcomes and is effective in enabling members and managers to understand the reasons for variations in performance against targets. Appropriate corrective action is taken in response to variations and followed up. People in the organisation understand how what they do contributes to overall achievement of authority priorities. All service areas have clear performance targets which contribute to	There is no performance management of staff, or where it exists, it only affects some. Staff operate in a vacuum in the absence of clear targets and do not understand how their work contributes to the overall achievement of authority priorities.

National Park Authorities Performance Assessment version 2.1

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	management of complaints. Evidence that the approach to performance management is **systematically used**.	corporate priorities but which are understood and achieved by people delivering frontline services. The public and stakeholders who rely on the authority's services have access to service standards and targets and know what to do if they are unhappy with them. Information on complaints and performance against service standards is taken into account in reviewing performance.	People who use authority services do not have access to information about standards and targets and do not know what to do if they are unhappy with the services they receive. Little or no account is taken of performance against service standards and complaints data in reviewing performance.
6.3 Has the authority assessed the risks inherent in its corporate and service plans?	• Evidence of a robust **risk management** strategy that is used in planning and delivering services.	The authority is risk aware particularly when entering new arenas and always assesses risks inherent in the things it does.	The authority is put at risk when entering new arenas. The authority does not carry out risk assessments in relation to the things that it currently does, or it is limited to insurable risks.
6.4 Does the authority ensure that it is making its resources work in the best way to deliver value for money?	• Ability of the authority to manage its **financial performance** and determine the extent to which it achieves **value for money**.	There is a record of sound financial management and resources are used flexibly in line with priorities. The authority is able to demonstrate that it achieves value for money.	The authority has a mediocre or poor approach to financial management. The authority does not know whether it gets value for money from what it does.
LEARNING 6.5 How self-aware is the authority on what it has done well and the problems it still faces?	• Level of **self-awareness** about its successes and what remains to be achieved; and a clear understanding of problems and solutions to these problems. •	The authority is self-aware and has a well informed and realistic understanding of what is has achieved, what remains to be achieved and possible solutions.	The authority lacks self-awareness and has limited understanding of the problems it faces and the possible solutions.

National Park Authorities Performance Assessment version 2.1

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6.6 Has the authority learnt from its own experiences and made changes in the light of these?	• Track record of **proactively learning through experience** from both successes and failures and making changes in the light of these which have had a positive impact on service delivery.	The authority has achieved successes in its priority areas and has learned from the experience of successfully achieving desired outcomes. The authority can identify clear examples of where it has learnt to overcome barriers to change. Its review and monitoring arrangements not only identify what works but also allow for rapid changes to strategies that are not working effectively.	The authority does not learn from successes and failures and continues to fail to deliver improvements because it does not learn from its own experiences. Service delivery arrangements are generally traditional and rarely change unless the service is at risk or external inspection has ordered it.
6.7 Does the authority actively learn from others and make changes as a result?	• Ability to use leadership and management styles appropriate to the stage of organisational development, and a culture that **encourages staff** to test out ideas and develop solutions which will benefit service users and visitors. • Ability to **proactively seek out learning from partners, communities, visitors and other authorities** and using this learning effectively, for example to overcome barriers to change.	A learning organisation where the leadership encourages staff to contribute to the learning process, to test out new ideas and develop solutions. The authority also proactively seeks out learning from others and has used this to drive improvements.	Staff are not encouraged to take part in learning or contribute to driving improvement. The authority does little to seek out learning from others, and there are few or no examples of this being used to drive improvements.
6.8 Is learning shared throughout the authority?	• Evidence that learning is **systematically shared** across the authority and doesn't just take place in silos.	Learning is effectively shared across the organisation.	Any learning that takes place is 'locked' into service areas and is not systematically shared across the organisation.

National Park Authorities Performance Assessment version 2.1

3. What has the authority achieved / not achieved to date?

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7 ACHIEVEMENT IN DELIVERY OF PURPOSES AND DUTIES 7.1 Is the authority delivering the outcomes and the quality of services that it set for itself?	For **National Park Authorities :** provision and quality of current activities – • "to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area • to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the area's special qualities by the public" For the **Broads Authority**: provision and quality of current activities for – • "conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Broads • promoting the enjoyment of the Broads by the public • protecting the interests of navigation"	There is clear evidence that the authority is achieving a high level of quality for the National Park itself and in the services it provides. The authority is meeting or exceeding its own challenging targets and standards for service delivery and compares well to other National Park Authorities and other types of authorities. This level of performance has been sustained for several years.	Performance information is lacking or shows that the authority can demonstrate little by way of positive outcomes and is delivering poor quality services. The authority fails to meet its own targets or standards, or has not set sufficiently challenging targets and standards for service delivery to drive up the quality of service.
7.2 How well does the authority use its duties and functions (e.g. planning) to deliver wider social and economic objectives for the area of the park?	• Can demonstrate achievement of social and economic objectives as part of local partnerships and provides a model of good practice in sustainable development and rural regeneration.	There is clear evidence that the authority is not just fulfilling its duty to further the statutory purposes for the National Park area but is also fostering wider economic and social objectives in partnership with other bodies. The authority performs strongly / excels in comparison to other National Park Authorities or other types of authorities which have similar functions e.g. delivery of development control.	There is no evidence that the authority is having due regard for wider economic and social objectives in pursuing National Park statutory purposes. The authority performs poorly in comparison to other National Parks or other types of authorities which have similar functions e.g. delivery of development control.
7.3 Is this in line with the authority's priorities and meeting national targets?	• **Current level of quality** achieved by the authority as shown by (typically): - Authority's own analysis in its self-assessment, BVPP, National Park Management plan and any other local sources. - Current performance on PIs against the authority's own targets and against national	The level of quality the authority is achieving in its service delivery is in line with its own and DEFRA's priorities. Stakeholders, communities, visitors, service users report favourably on their experiences of the park and/ or their dealings with the National Park Authority.	The authority is failing to provide good quality services in its own or DEFRA's priority service areas. Stakeholders, communities, visitors, service users do not report favourably on their experiences of the park and/ or their dealings with the National Park Authority.

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	comparisons. - Satisfaction surveys of stakeholders, communities, visitors, service users. - Inspections by the Audit Commission and others. - Observations and reality checks during the inspection. - Other external validation.	The park is being managed in a way that is sustainable for future generations and is ensuring the long term retention of the characteristics which define its importance as a National Park. The National Park area is accessible to minority groups in terms of physical access and interpretation. The services provided by the authority are similarly accessible to a wide range of minority groups. The National Park Authority is encouraging new communities to use the National Park.	The National Park is not being managed in a way that is sustainable for future generations and the characteristics which define its importance as a National Park are at risk. The authority is not considering the access needs of minority groups in terms of physical access or interpretation. The service provided by the authority is not accessible to minority groups. The National Park Authority is only working with those communities who already use the park.
7.4 Is the level of quality realistic in relation to local context and constraints?	• Extent to which this **level of quality is realistic in relation to the national and local contexts and constraints** in which the authority operates.	The level of quality in service is what could realistically be expected in relation to the context and constraints in which the authority operates.	The level of quality in service delivery is substantially below what could be expected in relation to the context and constraints in which the authority operates.
8. ACHIEVEMENT OF IMPROVEMENT IN DELIIVERY OF PURPOSES AND DUTIES 8. 1 What is improving in services and in cross-cutting areas?	• **Improvements in** services and cross-cutting areas which deliver against the statutory purposes and duties, positively impacting on the character of the National Park - increasing understanding of the National Park (and in the case of the Norfolk Broads Authority, protecting the interests of navigation) and where appropriate achieving wider objectives (such as the socio-economic position for local inhabitants). - Authority's own analysis in its self-assessment, BVPP and other local sources. - Improvements in PIs - Improvements shown in inspections by the Audit Commission and others.	The authority can demonstrate effective sustained progress towards long-term objectives for the National Park. There is clear evidence that the quality of the National Park and the services provided by the authority are significantly improving or that they have improved substantially. The quality of life for the communities within the National Park area is improving as a result of things the authority is doing itself or in effective partnerships. Improvements delivered are in line with objectives that the National Park Authority set	The National Park Authority has failed to achieve or make significant progress towards the key objectives that it has previously set for itself or the National Park. Performance information is lacking or shows that performance is in decline, static or, in authorities performing relatively poorly - it is not making sufficient progress. The authority seems unable to reverse this situation and bring about service improvement. The quality of life for communities living within the National Park area is static or declining as a result of the authority's decisions or actions. The National Park Authority has failed to deliver

National Park Authorities Performance Assessment version 2.1

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	- Other improvements validated by external and internal review such as improvements in environmental quality or the well being of inhabitants of the National Park area. - Improvements observed during the inspection. - Improvements in stakeholder satisfaction from both PIs and inspection evidence.	for itself 10 years ago. Improvements are sustainable for future generations.	long term improvements that it had previously set for itself and / or is only improving in areas not previously set as priorities. Improvements are not sustainable for future generations.
8.2 What is not improving?	• Evidence from the above sources about what is not improving.	The authority has identified areas where improvement is needed and has a prioritised action plan to bring improvement about.	The National Park Authority has little understanding of areas requiring improvement and no plans to improve performance because of a lack of aspiration to improve, or an unwillingness to confront difficult performance issues or an inability to set direction and manage change.
8.3 Are improvements in line with priorities?	• Evidence that improvements are **sustainable and in line with priorities.**	Improvements have been sustained over time and are in line with the authority's priorities.	The authority may be spending much energy but there are few outcomes and it achieves little, if anything, in its priority areas.
8.4 Would communities, service users and visitors recognise these improvements?	• Identification of **real outcomes** that can be seen and experienced by communities, service users and visitors, (not investment in or changes to internal structures and processes).	Real outcomes that represent conservation or enhancement of the natural beauty, wildlife or cultural heritage of the park. Enjoyment and appreciation of the park is being experienced by a widening range of communities and present non-user groups, and enhanced for existing users. Demonstrated improvements to the amount of navigable water way or other facilities for navigation. (Broads Authority only) New developments with the National Park area are to a high standard and help achieve National Park purposes. Quality of life for inhabitants has improved recognisably in economic and social terms.	The natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the park are in decline. The enjoyment and appreciation of the park is being experienced by a declining range of communities, visitors and service users and they see limited improvement in the quality of the National Park and services provided by the authority. The amount of navigable water way is shrinking and facilities for navigation are in decline. (Broads Authority only). New development is of poor quality or inappropriately located. Quality of life for inhabitants has declined in economic and social terms.

National Park Authorities Performance Assessment version 2.1

THEMES AND KEY QUESTIONS	INSPECTION FOCUS	AN AUTHORITY THAT DELIVERS STRONGLY AGAINST ITS PURPOSES AND HAS BUILDNG BLOCKS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	AN AUTHORITY THAT IS NOT DELIVERING AGAINST ITS PURPOSES AND DUTIES AND / OR LACKS BUILDING BLOCKS FOR IMPROVEMENT
9. DEVELOPING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ORGANISATION 9.1 Is the authority putting the right building blocks in place which will facilitate future improvements in services and cross-cutting issues?	• Evidence that the authority is investing and putting in place the **right building blocks** that will facilitate future improvement, especially where there are currently major gaps (e.g. projects to deliver the statutory purposes, organisational change, effective partnership working, community engagement, performance management, risk management, procurement, IT, organisational development, human resource policy development and training, asset management).	There is clear evidence that the authority has put in place building blocks which address existing gaps and will drive future improvement. These building blocks will contribute directly to improved quality of the park, service improvement, effective partnership working and meaningful community engagement. The building blocks are already bringing about change. The authority has a clear understanding of risk and manages it appropriately as it invests in new ways of doing things.	The authority lacks many of the key building blocks it needs to bring about service improvement e.g. procurement is poor and no investment is being made to address this. The authority is unable to identify or implement the building blocks it needs to put in place to bring about improvement, to work effectively with partners, and to engage with the community. The authority frequently exposes itself to risk as it has a poor understanding of inherent risk in the things it tries to do.
9.2 Is the authority taking reasonable steps to secure the necessary resources for investment?	• Ability to identify and secure the resources for investment including robustness of **medium-term financial planning,** and appropriate use of **external funding and procurement**. • Evidence of any gaps where appropriate investments are not being made which will impact on the ability to secure future improvement.	The authority has secured the necessary resources to drive future improvements in priority areas, for example from external sources and has clearly identified exit strategies in place where necessary. It has a robust medium-term financial plan in place to guide its investment decisions.	The authority has had limited or no success in securing the necessary resources to drive future improvements in priority areas, and does not carry out any medium-term financial planning, or it is only at an early stage.
9.3 Does the authority have a track record of opening itself up and responding to internal and external challenge?	• **Tangible progress** being made on the building blocks – they are not just good intentions, and the risks of new investments are managed appropriately. • Evidence that the authority is open to internal and external **challenge** and its investment decisions show that it is receptive to different ways of doing things. • Extent to which **BV reviews** and other self-assessment / challenge mechanisms are driving improvement.	The authority exposes itself to external challenge by inviting partners and communities to comment on its approaches and by encouraging external input. The scrutiny process in the authority is robust at providing challenge to the decision-making process. The authority compares itself with the best authorities (including other types of authority), and is receptive to different ways of doing things. Best Value reviews or other self assessment/ challenge mechanisms for continuous improvement have been effective in delivering improvements.	The authority does little to encourage external challenge and respond to it, often adopting a defensive approach, rather than being receptive to suggestions for change. The scrutiny process is weak at challenging the decision making process. The authority does little to learn from high performing authorities and tends to have an internal focus. Changes are incremental and tend to focus on doing the same things in a different way rather than doing different things. Best Value reviews or other self-assessment / challenge mechanisms for continuous improvement have not resulted in any substantial improvements in service delivery.

Glossary

Communities	Visitors to the park, inhabitants of the park, service users for the National Park Authorities services e.g. planning, sectors within the above such as ramblers, sailors, stakeholders such as wildlife or countryside groups or the scientific communities. We have used this term to include the wide range of groups whose interest and locations overlap the parks physical or conceptual boundaries.
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
IEG	Implementing Electronic Government – it is the intention of government that all services capable of such delivery should be available electronically. For further information see http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_localgov/documents/page/odpm_locgov_605195-04.hcsp
Partners	Those bodies and organisations with whom the National Park Authorities work through formal or informal arrangements for delivering services or developing strategies and plans.
National Park Management Plan	Statutory document revised over a 5-10 year timescale which sets out the objectives for the park and the National Park area.