

**To all staff and Members**

Dear colleagues

**National Park Authority Performance Assessment**

In the week beginning 26 September we shall be going through our corporate performance assessment. I wanted to write to you all this week so that you are clear about what the assessment involves, how we think we're doing and how you can help. I will be briefing anyone who would like more information at **Aldern House Board Room Tuesday 20 September 12.00-1.00** or in the **Morton Room, Losehill Hall Thursday 22 September 12.30-1.30**. You are all very welcome to attend and ask questions.

**1. What is performance assessment?**

- Performance assessment is a legal requirement on all English National Park Authorities. It is like, but not the same as CPA (comprehensive performance assessment) in councils, and is similar to OFSTED inspections of schools
- No final rating is given and we are not subject to a final inspection. Instead a report is prepared
- 5 Assessors will visit w/b 26 September following which they will send us their report within 3 weeks. The Authority will link the report to our own Performance Improvement Plan for next year and we will make all of these documents public
- The results will have no direct link to funds or staffing issues. It is a good thing as it will help us be better at serving the National Park

**2. How does the Authority think it will do?**

We have prepared a self-assessment, following a set of key questions common to all National Park Assessments (the Key Lines of Enquiry). Senior staff and members have now agreed this. In summary, we think that we:

- are realistic about the challenges we face and are ambitious to meet them
- are currently making real strides towards a more effective, co-ordinated and modern organisation
- deliver well to customers across a range of services, but not always consistently joined up
- work well in partnerships, but sometimes do not think enough about their outcomes or future
- need to develop further as managers and leaders, focusing on outcomes more than processes
- are well led by an increasingly coherent membership, management team and senior staff
- have developed and are now learning to use a better approach to performance management
- engage with staff, members and communities, but are only just beginning to do these well
- face some difficult financial challenges that will require further significant change in the future

### **How you can help**

During the week you might meet the assessors, perhaps presenting your work on the tour of the park or you may be attending the staff or member focus groups. You may come across the assessors in the corridors or as part of your job. When you meet the assessors, please be aware of the following:

- they are human and they are here to help! 3 of the assessors come from other National Parks and 2 from a local council background
- feel free to be open about your work and the Authority, but please be constructive and up to date in your criticism (you all are usually!)
- do not question or challenge the assessors about the process – the assessors have a busy week and are following fairly clearly set down questions. If you have any comments, concerns or feedback on the process, please contact Wendy Amis (x 293), your line manager or me
- if you want to feel confident about the breadth of the organisation's work, outside your own role, familiarise yourselves with the up-to-date Best Value Performance Plan or the summary

You may want to be familiar with our vision (as below) and you could prepare with examples of how your work delivers the vision, either through our direct services or in partnership with others. We have included a list of the Authority's achievements in the self-assessment and you should familiarise yourselves with this. The assessors will want to know how we deliver our vision. This is really about what you all do! It would be helpful to let the assessors know about your work:

- when we make a difference in the National Park through our own services – such as planning and development control, minerals, access, our own properties and promoting understanding
- when we work in partnership with others, such as in the LSPs, projects like Moors for the Future, SPITS and the partnerships with Defra, English Nature, the police, ambulance and fire services
- when we enable others to achieve for the National Park, through for example working with communities on village plans or through supporting volunteers

All of the documents referred to above and details of the assessment team, including their photos, are on the Authority's website at [www.peakdistrict.org/npapa](http://www.peakdistrict.org/npapa). And finally, I think that we are as well prepared as we can be. This is largely down to the positive and enthusiastic way in which all of you have helped in many different ways – attending the staff and member events, helping with practical preparations, helping write the self-assessment document or helping with tours and presentations. So thanks to you all.

Jim Dixon  
Chief Executive

15 September 2005

### ***Working together for the Peak District National Park***

- ***a special environment***

- *a welcoming place at the heart of the nation*
- *vibrant communities and a thriving economy*