



Pontefract Office:  
Off Southgate  
Pontefract  
West Yorkshire WF8 1NT

t 0845 601 0649

f 01977 70 70 70

e [resource.centre@solaceenterprises.com](mailto:resource.centre@solaceenterprises.com)

[www.solaceenterprises.com](http://www.solaceenterprises.com)

# Peak District National Park Authority

## Performance Assessment Report

October 2010



## Contents

- 1 Introductory Comments
- 2 Background
- 3 The Peak District NPA performance assessment process
- 4 Theme 1: Quality of vision and the Authority's plans to help achieve it
- 5 Theme 2: Setting and using priorities
- 6 Theme 3: Achievement of outcomes: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the National Park
- 7 Theme 4: Achievement of outcomes: promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public
- 8 Theme 5: Achievement of outcomes: wider sustainable development
- 9 Theme 6: Organisational capacity, use of resources, and governance
- 10 Theme 7: Leadership & Improving performance
- 11 Good Practice and Special Features
- 12 Recommendations
- 13 Summary of Assessment Scores



## **1 Introductory Comments**

- 1.1 The Peak District National Park Authority (“the Authority”) is very self aware and this showed through in the content of the self assessment document produced to inform the assessment team. Many of the issues identified by the team were already known to the Authority and whilst some have been included in the issues to consider under the seven themes, not all appear in the list of recommendations at 12 if they are already being addressed adequately.
- 1.2 The Authority has made considerable progress on its improvement agenda over the last few years and has responded well to the issues raised in the last National Park Authority Performance Assessment (NPAPA). The Authority has applied itself well to the creation of change and improvement.
- 1.3 A feature of this current NPAPA is the raising of expectations within the Key Lines of Enquiry to increase the standards of performance required to attain each of the four possible assessment levels. These are: performing poorly (1), performing adequately (2), performing well (3) and performing excellently (4). With a grading of 2 as acceptable baseline performance, an Authority that obtains a grading of 3 for a theme will be performing in an above average way and delivering to a very high standard. A grading of 4 will show exceptional delivery. The assessment scores for this Authority are shown on the last page of this report.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 National Park Authorities (NPAs) are required to achieve best value through structured approaches which improve their effectiveness, efficiency and economy.
- 2.2 To provide an objective external assessment of the individual NPA performance, each Authority is subject to periodic review through the National Park Authority Performance Assessment (NPAPA).
- 2.3 The NPAPA methodology uses a peer review team approach which is led and facilitated by SOLACE Enterprises. The process was developed and first applied for most NPAs in 2005. It is based on best practice assessment for public bodies and uses techniques similar to the former Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Comprehensive Area Assessment. NPAPA has been agreed by Defra, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Audit Commission and the English National Park Authorities Association as the appropriate approach for NPAs.
- 2.4 The NPAPA process is intended to give each NPA a better appreciation of its strengths and weaknesses in order to assist it to improve the quality of the important services which it offers to the public. It will show how good the Authority’s performance is in delivering its strategic objectives and outcomes and where it can make improvements.



2.5 The aims of peer assessment are to:

- Provide an objective, robust and managed external challenge to an NPA self assessment of its current performance;
- Encourage thinking about strengths and areas for improvement;
- Contribute to strong and forward looking improvement planning.

2.6 The SOLACE Enterprises model of peer assessment for NPAs involves an NPA officer, a serving local authority Chief Executive, an NPA member and an NPA Staff reviewer, all working with a SOLACE Enterprises facilitator for 4 or 5 days on site. This model has been specifically designed for providing peer assessment for national parks.

### **3 The Peak District NPA performance assessment process**

3.1 The assessment of Peak District NPA began several weeks before the October 2010 on site period when a provisional timetable of activities was drawn up and background documentation was circulated to the peer review team. This included the Authority's own self assessment which was considered closely by the whole team to help determine the focus of the assessment.

3.2 The team was:

- Ken Lloyd, SOLACE Facilitator
- Richard Leafe, Chief Executive (National Park Officer), Lake District NPA
- Graham Essex-Crosby, acting as the local authority Chief Executive,
- Malcolm Bowes, Member, North Yorkshire Moors NPA,
- Christopher Walledge, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Staff Assessor, Dartmoor NPA

3.3 On the evening prior to the visit the team met to prepare for the assessment process. In that preparatory meeting the team:

- Reviewed the proposed methodology for NPAPA.
- Reviewed the background information provided by the Authority, including the self-assessment, the related evidence and documentation.
- Agreed initial lines of enquiry to be pursued during the visit and any additional activities and documentation that was needed to gather information on these.
- Confirmed the team roles and responsibilities for the assessment period.

3.4 The team had regard to the whole of the published Key Lines of Enquiry for NPAPA, but gave particular attention to the issues that appeared from the documentation to warrant more detailed focus. In assessments such as these, the team cannot look at absolutely everything in the same level of detail and the process needs to be bounded in some way.

3.5 The various methods that the team used to gather information included:

- Face to face and telephone interviews with a cross section of stakeholders from inside and outside the authority.
- Small group discussions.
- Staff and Member sessions involving group discussions.
- A tour of the area to familiarise the team with the Peak District National Park.



- 3.6 Throughout the process the team held a continuing dialogue with the NPA to reflect back what they were learning and the way that their views were forming. This provided the Authority with an opportunity to present the team with additional information and also helped to generate ownership of our feedback and the thinking and reasoning behind our views.
- 3.7 On the final day of the visit the team fed back the results of the information gathering process in a more structured way.
- 3.8 While the team took care to note areas of strength as well as areas for improvement, since the main aim of the assessment process is to stimulate improvement, comparatively more attention has been given in this report to explaining and evidencing the areas on which the team believes the Authority should focus its attention in the future.
- 3.9 The following sections describe the team's assessment of the Authority's performance matched against the seven themes of the published Key Lines of Enquiry.

#### **4 Theme 1: Quality of vision and the Authority's plans to help achieve it**

##### *Strengths:*

- 4.1 The Authority's vision and ambition is clear. The National Park Management Plan 2006-11 (NPMP) identifies well the special qualities and needs for the area. It was built on extensive consultation and has proved to be an effective strategic document to guide the work of the NPA.
- 4.2 The vision is translated well into outcomes for the National Park. The NPMP has 10 defined outward facing outcomes covering Biodiversity; Cultural Heritage; Natural Beauty; Climate Change and Natural Resources; Mineral Extraction; Traffic, Travel and Accessibility; Recreation and Tourism; Understanding the National Park; People and Communities; and Economy. The plan gives a clear description of the outcomes for each of these and underpins this with nearly 90 high level actions.
- 4.3 Key partners and stakeholders generally relate well to the work of the NPA. There is a good connection between the work of key partners and that of the NPA in the delivery of declared outcomes and this connection shows through in consultation feedback received by the NPA. The NPMP Outcomes have regard to the 10 local strategic partnership strategies of constituent authorities.
- 4.4 Implementation of the NPMP has improved. Whilst the effectiveness of delivery against the NPMP was previously seen as variable it is now becoming more consistent. Within the Authority, this is helped by way that corporate objectives connect to the plan and through the use of key areas of focus in the performance and business planning process.
- 4.5 The NPMP itself and the strategies that support the NPMP are built on good data. The evidence base that has been accumulated and included in the wealth of strategies that exist is extensive and displays a deep and sound understanding of the area.



- 4.6 Strategic planning for the future is well founded. The comprehensive consultation that was a feature of the current NPMP has been further extended for the plan revision. Stakeholders see a significant change in the nature and style of consultation and there is optimism for the future. It is also proposed to have a more straightforward approach to the NPMP with fewer performance indicators and this is welcomed by managers.
- 4.7 There are examples of good cross discipline understanding. At certain levels in the organisation, such as the strategy leads, there is a good cross-cutting appreciation of the work being delivered in other strategy areas and managers are able to make connections that link up their individual activities.
- 4.8 Monitoring arrangements are adequate. The monitoring arrangements in place for the NPMP and supporting strategies are comprehensive, although their scale can make them difficult to comprehend easily. The NPA is making continuous improvements in this monitoring and has recognised there are issues to do with data that they need to remain aware of, including: getting data sets from external agencies cut to the NPA boundaries; feeding in new data sets; improving target setting; identifying appropriate indicators; and ensuring data quality.

*Issues to consider:*

- 4.9 The overarching vision is not consistently understood. Some partners and stakeholders do not clearly understand the vision and outcomes in the NPMP. Whilst key partners clearly relate well to the work of the NPA they also show underlying concerns about the outcomes and can show a lack of shared understanding. The NPA is aware of this through its consultation process and it has also identified the need to secure better buy-in from partners and stakeholders in the changing world that all agencies are now working in. There is now an opportunity to use the current consultation on the potential vision and outcomes to secure greater engagement and partner buy-in and the NPA is addressing this.
- 4.10 The number and breadth of strategy documents create an over complicated set of priorities and actions. The production of these documents was partly in response to the previous NPAPA comment that the organisation needed a more robust strategic framework. The documents are well written but taken together represent a significant but complex piece of work. Managers feel that a considerable amount of time is consumed by writing and monitoring these numerous strategies and some Members feel they are overcomplicated. Staff and managers feel that the number of detailed strategies that individuals may have to work to can be a problem, particularly where there are competing demands on available time. The overall impact of this is that the clarity of purpose can be lost and there is not a consistent set of principles or values articulated by managers, members and staff. The NPA knows that strategy documents do not link up as well as they might do and that their complexity could be streamlined, and will be working on this.
- 4.11 The continuity of the “golden thread” can be fragile. The golden thread that carries the vision, NPMP outcomes and objectives through to delivery by individual members of staff can become lost in the translation of what in total amounts to an extensive set of organisational priorities and strategies. Service deliverers also feel that the focus on what is important is not helped by the amount of unfiltered or non tailored communications that exist.



## 5 Theme 2: Setting and using priorities

### *Strengths:*

- 5.1 Organisational focus on priorities and improvement actions is good. The focus provided through corporate and service plans has allowed the NPA to maintain good organisational focus on priorities and improvement actions and to match and adjust its work to meet changing needs and issues. The strategies supporting the NPMP have also helped deliver projects and draw together partners and the voluntary and community sector. The annual service plans have also been effective in directing service priorities and spending on the declared corporate objectives and focus for the year. This means that systems and processes are in place to ensure the NPA stays focussed on short and medium term actions as a means to achieving the longer term aims.
- 5.2 There has been good staff consultation on organisational priorities. The staff consultation on the future shape of the NPA in response to reduced finances was inclusive and informative and encouraged staff to own the future direction and financial choices.
- 5.3 The NPA has been very successful in securing external funding and this has allowed the NPA to build notable projects into its priorities.
- 5.4 Resources are targeted at priorities. The movement of available resources and the prioritisation of corporate objectives have helped to achieve and support declared priorities. This combined with flexibility in the application of work programmes, means that the actions in the current corporate plan have largely been achieved as projected.
- 5.5 Partnership work is encouraging ownership. The approach to partnership working used by the NPA is appreciated by stakeholders and has led to some very effective partnerships that are valued by partners, such as the Peak District Land Management Advisory Service. Partners are comfortable working with the NPA and feel they can raise issues and be listened to. Constituent authorities would welcome a continuation of the change towards a more proactive approach with further innovation from the NPA.

### *Issues to consider:*

- 5.6 The corporate objectives and priorities have not always been well understood. Changing corporate objectives and priorities have not been consistently understood by staff and members and also by the public and partners. This has been recognised by the NPA and a good programme of activities has been implemented to address this.
- 5.7 Greater clarity and sharing of need is required in partnership working. There are aspects of partnership working that could be improved and this has been recognised by the NPA. The new ways of working that the NPA has been embarking on, including closer consultation; reviewing the make-up of the external monitoring group; and a greater appreciation of partners' priorities will assist in maintaining delivery in the new financial environment.
- 5.8 Staff engagement between the policy centre and front line staff could be improved. The singleness of purpose that is necessary to effectively deliver the required



priorities may be affected by the feelings of some front line staff that their views are not listened to sufficiently by the centre.

- 5.9 Commercial and community partnerships need developing. The NPA has recognised the need to enhance the current level of partnership working to include more commercial and community bodies in the delivery of some services.

## **6 Theme 3: Achievement of outcomes: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the National Park**

### *Strengths:*

- 6.1 Conservation achievements are impressive. There have been strong achievements across a broad range of projects, including some outstanding examples amongst initiatives such as the £1.8m Calver Weir project; the Eastern Moors project; the improvement in favourable or recovering habitat at Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (now 96.1% from 28% in 2003 and on NPA owned land 99.3% from 54.3%); reducing the impact of Longstone Edge quarrying; addressing the A628 by pass proposal; the declaration of Kinder Scout as a National Nature Reserve in October 2010; the reduced number of listed buildings at risk; the amount of landscape character conserved or enhanced (86%); the work on mineral extraction enforcement; promotion of the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme; removal of overhead electricity supply wires; a large number of Sustainable Development Fund grants; the growth of the Environmental Quality Mark scheme (93 awards); the work of the Fire Operations Group in reducing the impact of fires; and woodland schemes.
- 6.2 The Moors for the Future partnership is an exceptional example of innovation and leadership which has European recognition. This £17m moorland stabilisation and restoration project is a well structured and valuable project that has successfully secured a wide ownership from stakeholders and other organisations. The levering in of €5million for the MoorLIFE project to protect 1,600 hectares of blanket bog was a significant element in the partnership's progress.
- 6.3 The award of the Council of Europe's European Diploma for Protected Areas and the English Heritage's Heritage at Risk Award are marks of the NPA standing and its achievements.
- 6.4 Partnership working has been a robust part of delivering projects. Much of the attainment of conservation objectives has involved good partnerships. It was noted that this partnership approach is being extended and widened for the future to ensure the continued achievement of objectives in a time of reduced finances. This will include a broadening of those who are involved in, and who gain a benefit from, projects.

### *Issues to consider:*

- 6.5 The challenge now is how to take forward and extend the successes to cover a wider area of the park and also to consider how best to deal with the next stage of some major projects, such as managing the land stabilised through the Moors for the Future project.





6.6 The Biodiversity Action Plan is being reviewed. Through this the NPA intends to revise its Biodiversity Action Plan to set new targets in line with national objectives; address climate change; and better integrate biodiversity with landscape and spatial planning to ensure it achieves the targets by 2020.

## **7 Theme 4: Achievement of outcomes: promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public**

### *Strengths:*

- 7.1 The NPMP outcomes and the NPA objectives are being met. There is a range of activity delivering sustainable projects and initiatives against this theme. This includes initiatives such as: the Peak District Walking Festival; the Derwent Valley Community Rail Partnership improvements to stations and promotion of the line (70% increase in journeys in two years); starting the £2.25m Pedal Peak District project; controlling the illegal use of rights of way; working with landowners and other authorities to improve rights of way; cycle hire; the Saddle up for Summer programme of events; support for the Trans Pennine trail; and work with constituent authorities to develop the tourism and visitor experience.
- 7.2 Other approaches that promote understanding are being met. This includes; promoting moorland areas for recreation; rangers working in primary schools; guided walks and events; life long learning initiatives; schemes that promote sustainable tourism; securing in partnership the Access to Nature grant; balancing the wishes of competing interest groups; and changes to website information.
- 7.3 Resources are being targeted. Care is being taken to focus available resources on vulnerable groups rather than low participation groups, including: young people; under-represented groups from areas surrounding the national park; local residents and visitors. This is allowing resources to be used to their best effect.
- 7.4 The Recreation Strategy and its Action Plan are useful. The structured nature of the new document with clear milestones and outcome indicators is expected to make a difference to the delivery of this outcome.
- 7.5 Equality and diversity needs are catered for. There is a well structured approach to providing information and services with an equality and diversity perspective. Some of this builds on the well established Mosaic project as well as more recent initiatives.
- 7.6 Partner and stakeholder plans have obvious connections. Partners understand their contribution and roles. Outdoor recreation in the national park features in documents such as the Derbyshire Sport plan "2012 and Beyond" and its "Active Derbyshire" plan; the Sheffield City Council "Green and Open Spaces" strategy; and the "East Peak Cycling Innovation Partnership Cycling Study". In addition, work with the RSPB has seen joint public consultation and leasing of facilities.
- 7.7 Service user surveys show good levels of customer satisfaction and there is positive response about activities that the NPA and its partners deliver.



*Issues to consider:*

- 7.8 The profile and importance of “second purpose” activities needs to be reinforced. There are widespread perceptions amongst staff and stakeholders that the “first purpose” is seen to have a higher financial and organisational priority than the “second purpose” and some of this perception may be about recent decisions on resource allocation. Even though “first Purpose” budgets are also sustaining reductions, the use of the Corporate Objective prioritisation process to make the difficult decisions on how to focus the reduced capacity for delivery is perceived to have favoured “first purpose” activities whilst alternative means of delivering “second purpose” activities have not yet been fully developed. It is clear that the NPA is putting considerable effort into pursuing viable alternative delivery methods and it may be helpful to involve staff and partners more in this work.
- 7.9 There has not been a cohesive approach to tourism in the Peak District. Differences of approach between the NPA and *Visit Peak District* have not been helpful to the delivery of a cohesive approach to sustainable tourism. The NPA has carried out some good work in its own right and has played a strong strategic role. There are now indications that a wider Peak District brand is emerging and is being recognised nationally through renewed partnership approaches. The NPA will need to ensure that the new tourism partnership work reconciles the competing interests of commercial and sustainable tourism. This fits in well with partner desire for the NPA to take a stronger lead on tourism, although the distributed accountability for tourism within the NPA spread across a range of service providers makes it unclear how this will be robustly connected.
- 7.10 Interpretation was previously not as consistently effective as it could be. The NPA has recognised that it needed to make changes to the strategic approach of its interpretation arrangements and this is now being improved.
- 7.11 Equality and diversity needs to be more consistently addressed across the NPA. The NPA has identified that more needs to be done to ensure that the excellence in equality and diversity that exists in many service areas is mainstreamed across the Authority’s work, and this is being addressed.

## **8 Theme 5: Achievement of outcomes: wider sustainable development**

*Strengths:*

- 8.1 Volunteering is well structured. Engagement with communities and the public through volunteering and as champions is inclusive with a well established use of volunteers who are producing a considerable contribution to the work of the NPA. Volunteering is set to be extended and there are a number of additional volunteering opportunities being pursued, such as with village planning, grants, advice and monitoring and information gathering roles.
- 8.2 Community involvement is improving. There are some valuable initiatives, partnerships and forums in place that involve and engage the public with NPA activities. These include Peak Partners for Rural Action, The Peak Park Parishes Forum, the MOSAIC community champions and the village officers who work directly with communities in the national park. Parklife, the Authority’s regular communication to residents has developed through feedback from readers and has gained a national “silver” award for local government publications. There is also the involvement of schools and young people through the Moorland as Indicators of



Climate Change Initiative, which is a noteworthy scheme that has provided a model for other NPAs.

- 8.3 Understanding of the socio-economic context is sound. The NPA work on developing the consultation draft of the Local Development Framework has allowed it to gain a fuller appreciation of the needs and priorities of the area. This work has assisted a rural investment plan submission for affordable homes in the Peak sub region. Work with communities is being further improved and more is being understood about audiences and minority communities.
- 8.4 Business and community sustainability is being addressed. The Live and Work Rural programme, with support through the Peak Partners for Rural Action, and the development agency is helping businesses and communities to live and work in sustainable ways; there has been some good partnership work on small business development; and the “Working with People and Communities” strategy is now providing a sound framework for connecting with communities.
- 8.5 Environmental objectives are being delivered. The NPA use of its purposes to deliver environmental objectives includes a range of useful initiatives, such as those on climate change and the work with landowners and the farming community to enhance the landscape and habitats. Stakeholders are also very supportive of the advice they receive particularly in gaining access to grant funded schemes.
- 8.6 The minerals industry is well understood. The minerals planning activity in the NPA is significant and places a considerable workload on the Authority. Whilst this can be a drain on finances and officer time it has allowed the Authority to develop considerable expertise and success in addressing minerals cases. Partners acknowledge the high degree of understanding that exists in the NPA, and the recognition of the minerals industry and its issues. This helps the NPA reconcile differences more easily and potentially gain benefits for wider environmental objectives, both locally and regionally.
- 8.7 The reduction of carbon emissions is impressive. The NPA has reduced its carbon footprint quite significantly (16% reduction since 2008 with a further 10% projected this year) through the use of a creditable list of activities applied over an extended period of time. This means that the NPA is now being seen as the natural leader for the carbon reduction and climate change agendas for the area.

*Issues to consider:*

- 8.8 Community engagement could be improved further. Whilst there are some good examples of engaging with communities, more work needs to be done. The NPA has identified that it might engage in different ways and has started this process with the development of a new communications strategy. Further work could address issues such as: communities who do not see themselves as a part of the NPA and its direction and have a desire for more dialogue; communication with users on what the NPA is proposing to do and the progress of initiatives; residents who want to understand more fully the background to local planning decisions; stakeholders who want more business engagement, clearer documents and greater involvement from NPA members; and the public and community to engage with the Moors for the Future project alongside its new focus.
- 8.9 The planning function could be used more to deliver wider social and economic objectives. The NPA needs to further develop the integration of its planning and non



planning functions, such as those being pursued through the Live and Work Rural programme, to better use its purposes and resources to deliver wider social and economic objectives for the National Park, alongside the work on tourism. The use of the NPA statutory planning functions is perceived to provide limited support for innovative climate change, carbon reduction initiatives and renewable energy initiatives. Whilst the NPA has been effective in advocating good climate change policies it should consider whether it can do more to balance requests for installations on the ground with other planning policies. A help towards this will be issues such as: the results of studies for hydro power and anaerobic digestion, part financed by the NPA to test out these technologies; the NPA's support for delivery in appropriate cases; and the updated supplementary planning document on climate change and sustainable buildings due by mid 2011.

- 8.10 The planning service has recognised the need to evolve more and this must to be delivered. Planning services are seen by some users as outdated and without a broad enough place-shaping agenda or leadership for new design or renewables. They NPA is seen by some to be target dominated with limited connection to the rest of the organisation, even though every significant planning case involves consultation with key advisors across the Authority prior to decisions being made. The NPA acknowledges that it has had to devote considerable focus, energy and resources towards addressing the critical minerals issues and that this capacity might otherwise have been used in improving mainstream planning work. There is now an expectation that the new directorate structure will provide greater leadership to the planning service and there are concerns that will need to be addressed. These include: looking with local authorities for more flexibility in the delivery of sustainable housing; planners to more obviously act as facilitators to explore the economic benefits of schemes; and the stakeholder perception that planning approval is somehow easier to achieve for small schemes than bigger ones. Comments such as these are generally recognised by senior management, along with the need for a culture change in the way the service connects with applicants, and the early move to a broader development management ethos, as distinct from development control is imperative for the Authority's reputation.
- 8.11 The continued reduction of carbon emissions is a challenge. The further reduction of the NPA carbon footprint beyond the present successes will require a refreshed approach as it addresses the more difficult aspects within the organisation and this is recognised. The NPA needs to progress the Climate Change Action Plan to provide the leadership role sought by partners and through this produce an effective strategy for translating its own successful approach into initiatives that other organisations and communities can follow to create their own reductions.

## **9 Theme 6: Organisational capacity, use of resources, and governance**

### *Strengths:*

- 9.1 Financial reporting and accountability is strong. Financial planning and monitoring is thorough, timely and well structured with the District Auditor issuing an unqualified report.
- 9.2 Asset management has made good progress. There is a constructive framework to the management of assets and to realising their value with some particularly good work on a partnership management approach.



- 9.3 Long term costs and benefits are understood. The NPA has a good appreciation of the long term implications of its activities with robust forecasting, risk analysis and benefit consideration.
- 9.4 Governance is clearly set out. There is a good suite of governance documents and codes of conduct and Members are confident in delivering their current roles and responsibilities.
- 9.5 Risk management is in place. The NPA has robust policies for assessing risk. These have served it well in allowing the NPA to manage some of the considerable risk exposure that it has needed to face and handle constructively in recent years.
- 9.6 Workforce development is fit for purpose. Whilst there is no current workforce plan or organisational development plan there is the right spread of appropriate and up to date human resources policies and plans in place. A workforce plan up to 2014 is being developed. Management capabilities have improved noticeably over recent years and staff have high levels of commitment and are passionate about their work.
- 9.7 The Investors in People award is a great tribute to the NPA approach. The recently secured Investors in People status was significant in that it showed improved performance but also because of the panels comment that the NPA has "a culture which all public sector organisations aspire to achieve".

*Issues to consider:*

- 9.8 Cost and performance is not fully understood. There are some good initiatives and procedures to help understand cost and performance in process or activity driven areas and where these have been applied there is a clear understanding. However, unit costs on a broader basis are limited and there is not a consistent understanding of cost and outputs across the NPA. Work has been carried out by the NPA to address this and is ongoing and this should assist with assessing the relationship between costs, performance and value for money.
- 9.9 Performance management involving Members is underdeveloped and lacks rigour. Whilst there is a good performance management framework in place, performance is only formally reported to Members twice a year at mid year and year end, and this may not be a sufficient frequency if Members are to monitor performance effectively and have an influence during the performance year.
- 9.10 Risk awareness has implications. Having commented previously about the well developed risk assessment and well tuned awareness that exists and its positive benefits, there are other consequences. The high level of risk awareness can be construed by others as risk aversion. For example: the internal process for considering consultation documents are judged by some partners to be overly complicated and feature a lot of double-checking; similarly managers generating internal documentation for approval comment on the amount of detail requested; and corporate support services, such as ICT and legal, can be seen as a constraint on delivery without extensive consideration and checking.
- 9.11 Value for money studies lack robust challenge. There is no consistent approach or programme for value for money exercises involving Members and/or external challenge. In addition, studies tend to be service based rather than thematic cross cutting ones and are ad-hoc in nature. The NPA has invested in staff training on



evaluation techniques to enable studies to be undertaken but the challenge that has emerged so far is limited.

- 9.12 The scrutiny role needs emphasis. The Authority has a well documented approach to conducting scrutiny reviews but it was not evident that involvement was recognised by Members, other than with micro reviews. The Authority needs to restate its policy and ensure that the Audit & Performance Committee has an appropriate programme of thematic scrutiny evaluations to support the committee's rigour, transparency and accountability.
- 9.13 Governance arrangements and structures are unnecessarily time absorbing. Current governance arrangements are demanding on the time of both Members and senior officers and will carry a cost. There are a large number of formal meetings and informal briefings and other ad hoc meetings and gatherings taking place and these put a workload strain on Member time and that of officers who need to both prepare and attend. Members feel that documentation they receive is often too bulky and over complicated making it hard to digest and this is compounded by the length of agendas. It may be a culture of inclusion and elaboration that is behind this. The NPA has recognised that there may be over governance and that it would like to make some adjustments to the number of its formal meetings and is to consider the proposals of a Member review group. It is clear that Members now have a desire to be involved in different ways such as in advocacy with communities, and more closely involved in setting the strategic direction and scrutiny agenda of the authority. A redefining of their workload will be necessary to release the time for these new activities.
- 9.14 Workforce planning issues need to be addressed. Consideration should be given to succession planning and the needs that will arise with the projected likely retirements of key staff. The NPA is aware that constituent authorities can pay higher salaries for similar posts and because it is often the same pool of qualified people being accessed it may not be possible in the future to attract suitably capable and experienced applicants without some adjustments to the employment package on offer.
- 9.15 The 2010 staff survey highlighted that 42 per cent of staff do not feel valued. Whilst this percentage has improved since the last survey 2 years previously, more could be done to improve this and the communication issues between staff and managers. In the time of change over the coming years staff will require even more support to bridge these gaps. This has been recognised by the NPA with a noticeable change to communications including the road shows that allow the senior management team to meet staff. Direct contact such as this is important when big decisions are being taken.

## **10 Theme 7: Leadership & Improving performance**

### *Strengths:*

- 10.1 Leadership by Members and Officers is focussed on priorities. There is a clear recognition internally and by stakeholders about the focus of the NPA leadership's on delivering declared NPA priorities. There has also been good delivery on the organisational improvement agenda the NPA set out for itself.
- 10.2 Leadership capabilities are being developed further. The NPA is investing in improving its leadership skills and development. The NPA has acted on external





advice received and has been involved with some good initiatives to increase the capability of its leaders and to implement initiatives to develop capacity. The NPA has recognised the need to do more work on the management competency framework; member development; and the visibility of members in the community, and is addressing these areas constructively.

- 10.3 Understanding of the improvement being delivered is increasing. The NPA has successfully introduced a number of processes over recent years to try and increase the level of understanding and awareness on how it is delivering against priorities. This has included: reviews of performance data; customer surveys across a range of activities; and mystery shopper surveys. These led to a self assessed improvement statement which allowed Members to gain opinions about service provision before agreeing the latest improvement plan.
- 10.4 The Authority has taken care to put in place the building blocks it needs for the future. Organisational polices covering the administrative processes are in place and are being kept up to date. The move to the new NPMP is expected to be simpler and built around four themes of Diverse Landscape; Welcoming and Inspiring; Economy; and Community. It is proposed to have a better performance framework and it is likely to be a web based document that can be updated periodically and kept relevant as circumstances change.

*Issues to consider:*

- 10.5 Leadership needs to remain visible. To successfully guide the NPA through the challenging times ahead the leadership provided by both senior Members and officers needs to remain visible in order to help the organisation and its partners.
- 10.6 Maintaining quality and securing future improvement will be a challenge. The NPA has a proven record of delivering on its improvement agenda and of providing good quality outcomes. The challenge will be to build on this in a time of financial restraint and organisational consolidation. There are several parts to a successful solution, such as: the Authority's success at finding alternative provision for lower priority activities from which it is disinvesting; the way it forges an ongoing understanding with other agencies about the mutual impact of reduced finances; how the NPA meets the desire from constituent authorities and government for more shared service provision and joined up delivery of services; and most significantly the fuller articulation of the developing strategy for the future of the organisation, in terms of its own contribution and those of partners in delivering the NPMP.
- 10.7 Users and residents may not recognise improvements. It is not obvious that users and residents recognise improvements that have been made to services. The NPA has taken account of this in its new well structured and informative communications strategy and will also be introducing better feedback analysis to address this issue alongside carrying out the 2011 residents survey to understand their views.
- 10.8 High quality communication is important to the future of NPA success. The clarity with which the NPA communicates with staff; partners; stakeholders; users; and the public; and the way that it projects itself in documentation and on the website may be a crucial element in how well the NPA fares. The ability to convey what it is doing and in funding bids that it is capable of delivering will become more important as the pressure on available internal and external funding increases.



- 10.9 Capacity needs to be developed further. The NPA has identified a continuing need to build capacity and has agreed organisational changes to strengthen planning and to better integrate strategy work. It has also identified a need for further investment to develop management and vocational opportunities.
- 10.10 Project management and delivery could be improved. Whilst improvements to project management have been made and there is a sound framework in place, the application of project management techniques has been inconsistent and this variability could be improved. There are examples of large projects, such as the Moors for the Future partnership, where project planning and monitoring could benefit from some improvements, such as more formal monitoring of business plans against objectives and targets reflecting the exceptional scale and complexity of these projects. The NPA is aware of this and has an internal audit implementation plan in place to make changes. On a different level, partners feel that in smaller projects the NPA could be slicker and sharper in its dealings and there are examples where the project management approach has led to difficulties or where the project plan was slow to be produced leading to confusion.

## **11 Good Practice and Special Features**

- 11.1 The Moors for the Future Partnership project
- 11.2 The Live and Work Rural programme
- 11.3 The Moorland as Indicators of Climate Change project

## **12 Recommendations**

- 12.1 The recommendations of the team are shown below with the detailed points arranged under the seven themes of the Key Lines of Enquiry.

### ***1. Quality of vision and the Authority's plans to help achieve it***

- 12.2 There is an opportunity to secure better buy in from partners and stakeholder using the current consultation on the potential vision and outcomes. [4.9]
- 12.3 Rationalise the complexity of strategy documents as the opportunities arise. [4.10]
- 12.4 Use more direct and tailored communication to increase the clarity on what is important for the organisation and to strengthen the golden thread between strategy and delivery. [4.11]

### ***2. Setting and using priorities***

- 12.5 Consider developing the proactive approach in partnership working. [5.5]
- 12.6 Address the staff engagement issues between managers and front line staff. [5.8]

### ***3. Achievement of outcomes: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the National Park***

- 12.7 Consider how best to take forward the next stage of major projects, such as





managing the land stabilised through the Moors for the Future project.[6.5]

#### ***4. Achievement of outcomes: promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public***

- 12.8 Reinforce the profile and importance of “second purpose” activities, possibly by involving staff in the work to identify alternative delivery solutions.[7.8]
- 12.9 Ensure the new tourism partnership work reconciles the competing interests of commercial and sustainable tourism.[7.9]

#### ***5. Achievement of outcomes: wider sustainable development***

- 12.10 Continue to build on the improvements in community engagement and dialogue. [8.8]
- 12.11 Increase and improve the use of the planning function to deliver wider social and economic objectives. [8.9]
- 12.12 Evolve planning services to have a broader development management ethos.[8.10]
- 12.13 Implement the strategy for taking forward the reduction of carbon emissions and consider how you might deliver the leadership role sought by partners.[8.11]

#### ***6. Organisational capacity, use of resources, and governance***

- 12.14 Consider whether Member involvement in performance management is at the right level.[9.9]
- 12.15 Have organisational alertness to the implications of your corporate risk awareness.[9.10]
- 12.16 Structure value for money studies to include robust challenge and look to introduce some cross-cutting review. [9.11]
- 12.17 Consider the emphasis and programme for scrutiny evaluations. [9.12]
- 12.18 As part of the current governance review consider the additional Member issues identified in this assessment.[9.13]
- 12.19 Consider the succession planning implications for the NPA. [9.14]

#### ***7. Improving performance***

- 12.20 Ensure visible Member and officer leadership. [10.5]
- 12.21 Consider how you will maintain quality and secure future improvement. [10.6]
- 12.22 Consider how you can continue to deliver high quality communication and organisational projection. [10.8]
- 12.23 Consider how project management and delivery could be improved. [10.10]



### 13 Summary of Assessment Scores

13.1 The teams assessment of scores for each of the KLOE themes are as follows:

Key Line of Enquiry	Score
1. Quality of Vision	3
2. Setting and Using Priorities	3
3. Achievement of Outcomes: Conservation	4
4. Achievement of Outcomes: Promoting Understanding and Service Delivery	3
5. Achievement of Outcomes: Wider Sustainable Development	2
6. Use of Resources: Managing Money Managing the Business Managing other Resources  Use of Resources – Overall score	3
7. Leadership & Improving Performance	3

#### SCORING

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements – **performs poorly**
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements – **performs adequately**
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements – **performs well**
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements – **performs excellently.**

Ken Lloyd on behalf of SOLACE Enterprises  
October 2010

