

BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Dear Member

A meeting of the **EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING** will be held in via a **VIRTUAL MEETING ON TUESDAY, 19TH OCTOBER, 2021 AT 4.30 PM** when your attendance is requested.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Mealing-Jones

Chief Executive

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY FILMS AND
WEBCASTS ALL ITS PUBLIC MEETINGS LIVE -**
<http://www.breconbeacons.public-i.tv/core/>

1 CORRESPONDENCE

To receive and consider the attached Schedule of Correspondence and any recommendations thereon (below).

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest from Members relating to items on the agenda. Members' attention is drawn to the sheet attached to the attendance sheet and the need to record their declarations verbally and in writing, specifying the nature of the interest.

If Members have declared an interest in an item please ensure that you inform the Chair when you are leaving the room, so that this can be recorded in the minutes.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

To give opportunity for members of the public to address the meeting in accordance with the Authority's Public Speaking Scheme.

4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive a verbal report on meetings and events attended by the Chairman since the last meeting of the Authority.

5 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive a report from the Chief Executive on meetings attended and progress made on Authority business since the last meeting of the Authority.

6 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020 (Pages 3 - 26)

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Under the Authority's Standing Orders no further business may be considered unless stated on the agenda.

SCHEDULE OF CORRESPONDENCE

1. To receive apologies for absence
2. Such other correspondence as, in the opinion of the Chairman, is of such urgency as to warrant consideration.

Any enquiries about this agenda should be addressed to Julia Gruffydd julia.gruffydd@beacons-npa.gov.uk or Angharad Hawkes Angharad.hawkes@beacons-npa.gov.uk

Annual Governance Statement 2020-21

Name of Committee	National Park Authority (Extraordinary General Meeting)
Date	19 October 2021
Report Author	Julia Gruffydd
Job title	Democratic Services Manager
Contact Details	julia.gruffydd@beacons-npa.gov.uk
Purpose of Report	To seek approval of the Annual Governance Statement for publication with the Annual Accounts
Single Integrated Assessment	Not applicable
List of Enclosures	Enclosure 1: Draft Annual Governance Statement Report on Annual Governance Statement to NPA 24 September 2021
Public Interest Test	Not applicable
Recommendation:	To approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21 for publication with the Annual Accounts.

I. Introduction or Background

All local authorities, including National Park Authorities, are required to produce an Annual Governance Statement each year which demonstrates responsibility for developing and shaping governance in order to achieve the highest possible standards in a measured and proportionate way.

It is a retrospective report in that it seeks to give assurances about the previous financial year, and therefore depends on both internal and external assurances. These mainly come from internal and external audit but the Authority is required to carry out a Review of Effectiveness of its governance.

The draft document was presented to the Authority on 24 September 2021 and officers advised that following advice from Audit Wales on that draft, further work was needed and members agreed to defer the item to the Authority meeting on 26 November.

However, following that meeting Audit Wales advised that they needed an Authority approved draft earlier than that, in order for the statutory audit to take place by the end of the November. It was thus necessary to convene this EGM to enable this to happen. The Authority meeting on 26 November will consider the audited Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Statement of Accounts.

Members have been consulted on the amended draft and some comments were received which have been considered and largely included. However, it is important that the conclusion strikes the right tone in terms of the considerable progress made against the significant work still to do to address the Audit Wales statutory recommendations.

1.2 Proposals

A link is provided to the more detailed covering report presented on 24 September. A summary of the changes that have been applied following comments from Audit Wales include:

Executive Summary

- Need to add an opinion on the level of assurance that the governance arrangements can provide and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework – given the year we have had, reported findings of Audit Wales and TIAA.
- Standardise use of acronyms throughout, typographical errors and some replaced words
- Some sense checking/clarification needed in a few places
- Need to better highlight the key risk of the cyber-security attack and its impact on the day to day operations but also decision making and performance. Needs to be covered at least in the narrative as it had a major impact on the Authority. Later in the report they request acknowledgement that this is an area that needs strengthening or is being strengthened
- They also want it to be reflected in section 4 in the action plan to address significant issues - however, we have pushed back on this as a significant amount of work has already taken place to strengthen systems, and this will be ongoing work in future.
- Need to record that Audit Wales have written to the Authority about their expectations on progress against the AW Action Plan and have made clear that if progress is not made then they will need to consider further action. At present the jury is still out.
- Signature requirement has changed – should be signed by Chair and CEO as per CIPFA guidance

Effectiveness of Governance

- Make clear the recommendations made by Audit Wales are statutory

- Need confirmation that we had key statutory roles in place eg. MO taking temporary responsibility for DPO role
- They feel we should better reflect that one of the key challenges in the last 18 months has been staff capacity and morale and this is an area where the Authority needs to address some major risks to ensure it has an effective and well supported workforce.
- Requested a copy of the draft Financial Management Code – this has been sent
- Need to put in a conclusion - a commitment to monitoring implementation as part of the next annual review – after the tables in section 4

I.3 Implications

The AGS provides a useful self-analysis of the Authority's governance and an opportunity both to acknowledge good practice and identify weaknesses.

I.4 Risk

The Authority is required to produce this to the same timescale as the Annual Accounts and is audited on it by the Audit Wales. Not to do this this would be seen as a failure to comply and would result in reputational damage. Audit Wales will audit this document and report back on compliance.

I.5 Conclusion

Members are asked to review the AGS and approve it for audit by Audit Wales so that it can be published with the Annual Statement of Accounts.

RECOMMENDATION: To approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21 for publication with the Annual Statement of Accounts

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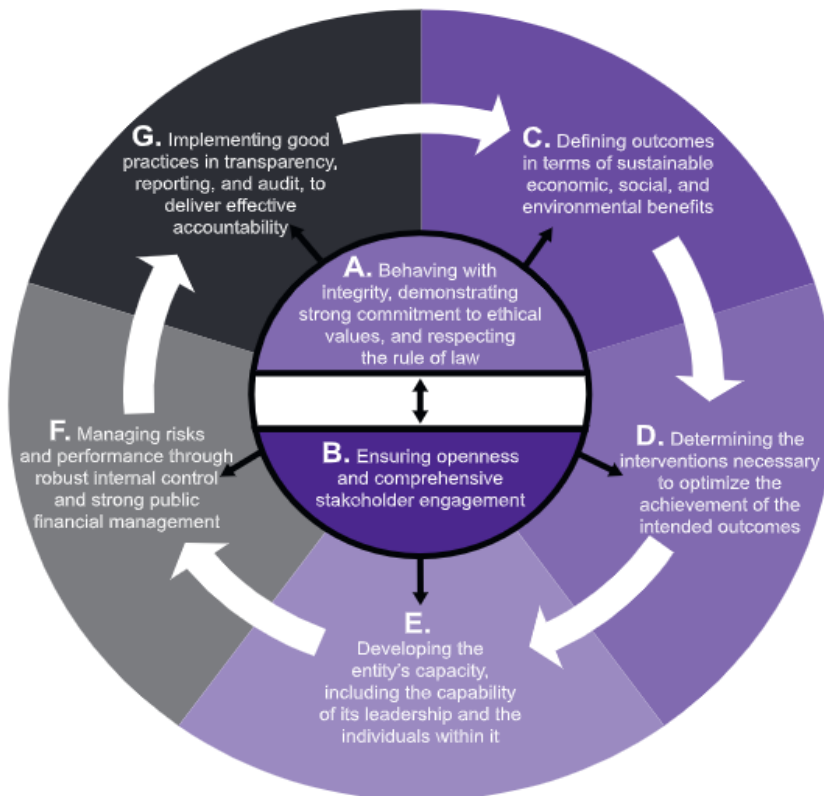
DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020-21

Executive Summary

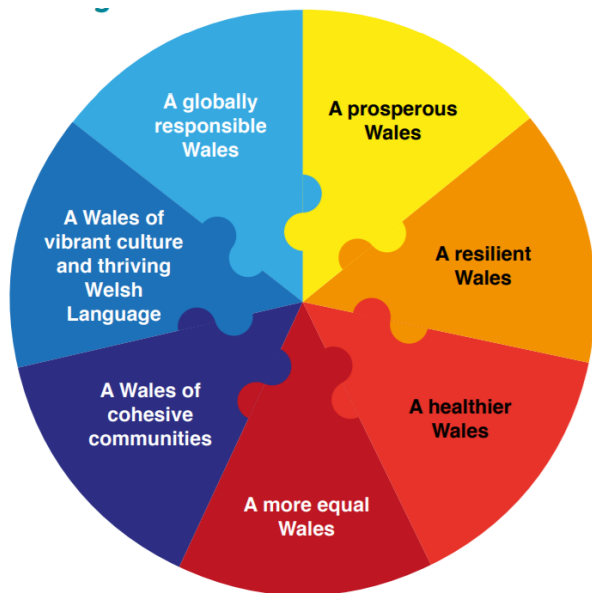
A) Responsibility for Governance

The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) aspires to high standards of governance, behaviour and compliance through a partnership of members, officers, stakeholder organisations and individuals.

Responsibility for a sound system of governance sits with BBNPA which comprises [18 members](#) appointed from the seven constituent authorities and the Welsh Government. In doing this, it commits to the seven principles of good governance defined by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in its *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016*:



It also commits to the wellbeing goals set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:



B) Commitment to address governance issues and keep arrangements under review

BBNPA is committed to maintaining and improving governance and has set a framework in place to ensure regular review of its arrangements and actions to improve. This review is through its [Audit and Scrutiny Committee](#) which works closely with internal and external audit on legal compliance and good practice, and to demonstrate assurance on this.

BBNPA faced an unprecedented level of challenge in 2020-21, agreeing a Change Programme comprising cultural and structural changes, which was then paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic, when attention focused on enabling staff to work remotely and governance systems to be adapted. The programme was restarted in September 2020 but a major cyber-attack on BBNPA's systems and files meant that resources had to be allocated to restoring these and enabling decision-making to continue. During this period the Chief Executive announced his resignation and left BBNPA on 31 March 2021, necessitating a full recruitment campaign. Senior members stepped in to address a shortfall in leadership and manage risks, and appointed a Transition Director from the beginning of April until a new Chief Executive could be appointed. They also led the recruitment campaign and a new Chief Executive was appointed and started on 19 July 2021. Several redundancies proposed as part of the Change Programme, and some resignations, took effect in December and January which exacerbated the leadership gap. This led to significant capacity issues, although staff and members have stepped up to take additional responsibilities and risk has been mitigated as far as practicable.

During 2020-21 Audit Wales carried out a review of the management of the Change Programme and published a [report](#) in March with three detailed statutory recommendations to drive forward the Change Programme, strengthen governance and strengthen decision making. Their key findings were as follows:

- The rationale for the Change Programme was clear, to create a National Park with an improved environmental condition with communities able to adapt to climate change and transition to a low carbon economy;
- Translating the Change Programme into practice was undermined by poor communication and indecisive leadership;

- The Change Programme was paused due to the pandemic but its relaunch in September 2020 was not handled well and created further problems;
- The Change Programme has exposed some weaknesses in governance systems and behaviours;
- The Authority has to address some critical risks and rebuild confidence, systems and governance to move forward.

Overall, Audit Wales concluded that weaknesses in leadership and governance were highlighted by poor management and delivery of the major change programme initiated by the Authority in October 2019. The Authority accepted the findings of the report and agreed an [action plan \(item 7 on the agenda\)](#) which will continue to be implemented and monitored by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in 2021-22.

C) Summary of significant issues identified

The following items have been identified through the review of effectiveness as significant issues for BBNPA to address in 2021-22:

1. Increase staff capacity
2. Implementation of Audit Wales Action Plan
3. Improved performance and risk management
4. Impact of Phosphate issue on the Local Development Plan

The cyber-security attack also had a major impact on systems and day to day operations in late 2020. Business continuity plans were activated and BBNPA moved swiftly to recover data and systems, utilising external specialist support as needed and key operations were restored very quickly. Significant work has been undertaken and there is work ongoing on data management and strengthening the resilience of systems in line with changes in technology and lessons learned however, this is not considered to be a significant governance issue for 2021-22.

An action plan is set out at Section 4 below.

D) Overall opinion on the level of assurance and if fit for purpose

At the meeting on [7 May 2021](#) Internal Auditors TIAA presented their annual report for 2020-21 and reported: “TIAA is satisfied that, for the areas reviewed during the year, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority has reasonable and effective risk management, control and governance processes in place”

Audit Wales Report

BBNPA has accepted the statutory recommendations on leadership and aspects of governance in the Audit Wales Report and takes the findings seriously. It has approved a detailed action plan which is being implemented and progress reported to each Audit and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis. Audit Wales has written to BBNPA to set out their expectations and made clear that if progress is not made then they will need to consider further action.

The Authority’s Opinion

The Authority saw some significant challenges in 20-21 – the Covid 19 pandemic, a serious cyber-attack, the departure of the Chief Executive on 31 March 21, the loss of an experienced cadre of staff through redundancy and resignations which has left the existing structure stretched and lacking in resilience, and the identification by Audit Wales of three statutory recommendations concerning governance, decision making and behaviours which the Authority is in the process of

addressing as a priority. Overall BBNPA are satisfied that progress is being made and that governance arrangements are fit for purpose. The Authority recognises that the priority for 2021-22 is to continue to build on that progress in order to restore mutual trust and confidence between officers and members and to move beyond the period of restoring internal stability and into a phase where the Authority is well placed to fulfil its role in leading delivery of an ambitious new Management Plan for the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Overall, governance arrangements, to a large extent, stood up to the challenges we faced, with Authority and committee meetings held online, delivery adapted in ways to ensure continuity (in particular the planning process) and working with partners to manage access to the countryside.

The review of effectiveness confirms the governance arrangements in place and where these are being strengthened. It considers that these are fit for purpose but accepts the need for some further changes to be applied.

Signatures

CLlr Gareth Ratcliffe (Chair)

Date:

Catherine Mealing-Jones (Chief Executive)

Date:

1.0 Identification of key governance arrangements

BBNPA has organised a structure to ensure that good governance supports its delivery of National Park purposes and duty.



1.1 How BBNPA has responded to Covid-19 and adapted governance

BBNPA moved swiftly to enable its staff to work remotely as far as roles allowed. With the closure of centres some staff were furloughed through the UK Government Scheme, but no jobs were lost as a result of the pandemic. All staff were supplied with laptops and mobile phones if they did not already have them, and Microsoft Teams was installed on all devices to maximise internal communication and to encourage regular team meetings to support staff.

Despite the constraints of lockdown most services were able to continue, or processes adapted to virtual models. Significant effort was made by Human Resources and managers to support staff and provide opportunities for counselling and information on mental health support. Staff deserve recognition and credit for the positive way they responded to the challenges of home working, as well as managers for assuming responsibility for virtual teams as well as working as a Covid Management Team to liaise with Welsh Government and partners.

All officer groups were able to meet via Teams and with National Parks UK procured a meeting platform (Lifesize) to enable virtual meetings of BBNPA and its committees to continue. Decision making by BBNPA has not been adversely affected by the pandemic, although there have been

some technical challenges in sourcing the most reliable meeting platforms, particularly in relation to hybrid meetings which will be key when we return to the office.

BBNPA worked closely with the Welsh Government, police authorities and partner organisations to apply Covid-19 restrictions to rights of way and ensure that accurate messaging was delivered to the public. Once restrictions eased, it then dealt with unprecedented numbers of visitors, and, in line with other National Parks, a high level of irresponsible use of the countryside. BBNPA contributed to targeted media campaigns to educate visitors and worked with local landowners to try and mitigate the impact. The increased level of partnership working has been a positive outcome of the pandemic and there has been recognition of the part that Authority staff on the ground played during lockdown and as restriction eased.

Continuity of critical financial processes and controls enabled document storage, payments, income, financial and treasury management to be moved fully online. Both internal and external audits have been carried out online during the year, with full access to supporting information. This was enabled by the rapid implementation of Office 365 and provision of appropriate IT and communications hardware to staff, supported by the IT team.

2.0 Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Governance

Principle 1: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
A maintained suite of Regulatory Documents and Protocols which gives members and officers guidance on the ethical framework and the behaviours expected.	<p>There have been no complaints in relation to the Code of Conduct. An Audit Wales report issued in February 2021 made statutory recommendations in respect of clarifying members' roles and responsibilities and work is under way to address these through an action plan.</p> <p>The same report made statutory recommendations in relation to clarifying the Scheme of Delegation in relation to Policy Forum, which have been completed and agreed by BBNPA.</p> <p>Scheme of Delegation has been updated during the year to meet governance needs and a full review of delegation will take place in 2021-22 to align with the new leadership team and streamline governance.</p> <p>Frequently Asked Questions produced to aid clarity and understanding of all regulatory documents.</p>
Complaints Process	Complaints are reported quarterly to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee . In 2020-21 35 complaints were received, of which 2 were upheld, 4 partially upheld and the rest not upheld.
Register of Interests	All members' registers of interest published online. Officers' register held by HR. Annual reminders sent to members and officers.
Financial Regulations, Whistle-blowing and Anti-Fraud and Corruption policies	All published online. The planned reviews of these documents, placed on hold pending a decision on BBNPA's senior management structure and the adoption of an improved and updated Scheme of Delegation, will be completed in 2021-22.
Financial Management Code	This new code is designed to ensure that all local authorities operate in accordance with the principles of good financial management, including longer-term financial planning and resilience to meet both

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
	operational and financial shocks. Each authority must assess and demonstrate its compliance with the code. 2020-21 was a shadow year for the implementation of the code and a preliminary assessment has been carried out to review compliance, apply a RAG rating to each element of the Code and identify areas for improvement. A key component is compliance by BBNPA with the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government which addresses the promotion of high standards of ethical behaviour, professionalism and integrity.
Statutory Roles	Head of Paid Service (Transition Director/CEO), Section 151 Officer (Finance Manager) and Monitoring Officer all in place. The Data Protection role was fulfilled on an interim basis by the Chief Executive following the resignation of the Systems and Performance Manager in November 2020 who had fulfilled this role, and then by the Monitoring Officer on a temporary basis. The Transition Director recommended a combined post of Monitoring Officer/Solicitor and DPO on 4 April 2021 but this was withdrawn by members. The Authority agreed a temporary 12 month combined role of Monitoring Officer/Solicitor/DPO at its meeting on 14 May 2021 and the role was filled from 1 July 2021.
Information Governance	The impact of the cyber-security attack in September 2020 was significant and has re-emphasised the need for mitigating actions that had been delayed at the start of the pandemic due to the need to allocate resource to setting all staff up to work remotely. Ongoing work has increased resilience and has involved staff refresher training on security and good practice. New post of Monitoring Officer, Solicitor and Data Protection Officer created and the postholder is reviewing all processes. Refresher training given to members on information governance and data protection and is now being scheduled for officers.
Business Continuity	This was invoked in 2020-21 both for Covid-19 and the cyber-security attack on BBNPA in September 2020. These procedures enabled swift action to be taken in both cases and services to be maintained. Procedures were tested and revised as part of this process.
Audit Arrangements	Processes in place to work with internal audit (TIAA) and external audit (Audit Wales) at officer and member level.
Standards Committee	The Standards Committee complies with all Standards regulations and meets at least once a year.
Service Level Agreements	Agreements are place for payroll, the financial system and some planning legal services. Established frameworks used to ensure value for money.
Membership of appropriate professional bodies by key staff	Key staff are members of relevant professional bodies and are able to access personal and professional support and CPD to facilitate their work and help maintain professional standards.

Principle 2: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
All agendas and reports published online	Public speaking scheme continued throughout lockdown and there was take-up of this in Planning, Access and Rights of Way Committee .

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
Publication scheme on website facilitates access to all publicly available information	Privacy Statement for Planning Services was updated and is being reviewed by the Solicitor/Monitoring Officer
Corporate Plan	Published for 2020-21 the plan set out its priorities linked to National Park Management Plan themes. It took account of Covid-19 but made assumptions for normal work to resume in September 2020 which was compromised by further lockdowns and restrictions.
Consultation and engagement	<p>As part of the review of the Local Development Plan and National Park Management Plan BBNPA is establishing Citizen Assemblies and a Stakeholder Reference Panel. An officer has been appointed to focus on stakeholder engagement as part of the Policy Team.</p> <p>Consultation during lockdown was carried out online. The National Park Authority's 12-week consultation on the NPMP21 Issues, Visions and Objectives document for the Brecon Beacons National Park Management Plan was launched on the 3rd March 2021 and closed on the 26th May 2021. The consultation document was sent electronically to a wide range of stakeholders and was made available on the National Park Authority's website and at deposit locations across the National Park (if open due to Coronavirus restrictions). A notice of the consultation was also published in the local newspaper on the 3rd March 2021. Additional consultation meetings were held with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to discuss the document and the alignment with other important policy positions/publications. Alongside the consultation, BBNPA has been encouraging individuals to register their interest in a Citizen Assembly panel and encouraging organisations or groups that work in the National Park to join BBNPA's Stakeholder Reference Panel. The panels will assist in making decisions about how the NPMP could address the issues identified within the consultation document and also involvement in the implementation of the changes agreed. This is currently being formulated and is ongoing. All of the feedback and responses relating to this consultation represent a valuable source of information and ideas and will be used to inform the National Park Authority's work in preparing its full National Park Management Plan, which will be issued for public consultation in Autumn 2021.⁶⁹ individuals and a wide range of organisations / groups responded to the Vision & Objectives consultation.</p>
Communications	Despite significant capacity issues with only one officer in post BBNPA maintained an effective communications strategy during all lockdowns, providing information to the public about access and closures. Social media was a key part in this. BBNPA has recruited a Public Affairs Manager for 2021-22 who will focus on strategic communication methods and effective promotion of the Park.
BBNPA engages fully on aspects of its work.	<p>Planning: statutory consultee list for all planning applications. Site notice and neighbour notifications undertaken.</p> <p>Management Plan Vision and Objectives – a 12 week public consultation was undertaken on the strategic direction of the statutory management plan. Numerous consultation events were undertaken (online) to engage individuals and organisations directly with the consultation.</p>

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
	<p>Llanspyddid Village Plan - 8 week consultation (extended due to lockdown) to provide the public and organisations opportunity to input in plans to improve the sustainability and resilience of the village of Llanspyddid.</p> <p>Brecon Town Plan – the consultation on the action plan was extended and a face to face event held on Saturday 10th October 2020.</p> <p>Amendments to Planning Policy relating to Retail development to assist in recovery from COVID Published for 8 week public consultation online.</p> <p>Full engagement with Natural Resources Wales, the Welsh Government and other Local Planning Authorities in responding to the phosphate issue in Riverine Special Areas of Conservation, including developing a phosphate plan.</p>
<p>Contributing to initial delivery of Wellbeing Plans under Well-being of Future Generations Act – for Powys, Monmouthshire and Carmarthenshire</p>	<p>BBNPA has officer representatives on Public Service Boards, and member representation on the Powys PSB Scrutiny Board.</p>
<p>Working with Landowners and occupiers to develop integrated sustainable land management solutions.</p>	<p>Despite the restrictions of Covid-19 BBNPA continued to support Black Mountains Land Use Partnership and complete the Sustainable Management Scheme, providing project administration, project management, financial management, secretariat, PR and direct delivery of project outputs. Direct participation in BMLUP’s transition towards establishing a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Delivered circa £480k worth of peatland restoration work and upland path restoration work in the Black Mountains, Central Beacons and Mynydd Du.</p> <p>Collaborating with NRW and graziers to develop an integrated land management option for Meithrin Mynydd via the new Sustainable Farming Scheme.</p> <p>Delivered Invasive Non-Native Species control on the Rivers Tawe and Usk and have secured cooperation and first-name working relationships <i>with all</i> the riparian landowners affected.</p> <p>Delivered circa £70k worth of capital footpath improvement projects on Public Rights of Way in accordance with the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and WG capital grant.</p> <p>Assisted NRW to develop its (now successful) application to the EC LIFE fund for “4 Rivers for LIFE,” for habitat restoration works on the River Usk SAC, due to commence during late 2021.</p> <p>Active participant in Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water’s “Brecon Beacons Mega Catchment” programme.</p>

Principle 3: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
National Park Management Plan Corporate Plan	<p>BBNPA has been working towards its new Management Plan which will be published in draft in November 2021. The Corporate Plan will (in part) deliver this over multiple years.</p> <p>Work on the National Park Management Plan continued during the year, with members and officers working together to identify an ambitious and innovative plan. This was supported by an external speaker programme at Policy Forum which provided opportunity for learning and debate on complex issues.</p>
Position Statements	<p>BBNPA has developed a number of position statements to set out its aspiration and intent on climate change and land management, sustainable rural economy as well as an Evidence Position Statement which creates the foundation for all policy development.</p> <p>https://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/the-authority/position-statements/ and Sustainable Rural Economy. Evidence statement on page 21</p>
Strategic Equality Plan	<p>This set out how we meet our statutory duties in relation to the Equality Act 2010 and provides a clear starting point to ensure we deliver high standards of service fairly across all sectors of our communities, user groups, businesses and visitors. We aim to promote diversity, inclusiveness, equality of access and eliminate inequalities in everything that we do.</p>
Supplementary Planning Guidance	<p>BBNPA agreed consultation in May 2021 on amendments to retail policy requirements in relation to changes of use in the retail centres in our towns to help ease the burden on businesses following the pandemic.</p>
Placemaking Charter	<p>BBNPA, along with the three other National Parks of Wales have committed to becoming signatory to the Placemaking Charter. This charter sets out that the National Parks of Wales agree to support placemaking in all relevant areas of our work and promote the six placemaking principles in the planning, design and management of new and existing places.</p>
Historic Environment Action Plan	<p>The Historic Environment Action Plan is being developed through the newly formed Historic Environment Partnership. It will when completed (Summer 2022) define key objectives in relation to the management of the Historic Environment and actions for the partnership to deliver.</p>

Principle 4: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
Budget Strategy	<p>Each detailed budget for the coming financial year is accompanied by detailed projections for the following two years. Budgeting and medium term financial planning are key components of the new CIPFA Financial Management Code. BBNPA's financial landscape is strongly shaped by the Senedd's own financial planning, which for National Park Grant is currently limited to a single-year settlement.</p>

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
	<p>The draft budget for 2020-21 was approved by BBNPA on 11 February 2020. Subsequent events, particularly the Covid pandemic and its impact on service delivery, operational income and BBNPA's ability to progress its planned management restructure, meant that the budget required a full review during the year. Managers are encouraged and supported to proactively manage their budgets to ensure they are effective financial management tools.</p> <p>The final financial outturn for the year, as reported to Members in July 2021 was some 4% below the revised estimate, indicating that BBNPA had been able to maintain budget management processes despite the considerable disruption and uncertainty in both its operating environment and internal management structure.</p> <p>The draft Statement of Accounts for 2020-21 was presented to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 23 July 2021.</p> <p>BBNPA has received a 10% increase in its core budget for 2021-22 enabling more staff resource to be provided to service delivery teams. It has also received additional funding from Welsh Government to meet the cost of Covid-19 and monies under the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places scheme.</p> <p>There is currently some mismatch between the timing of specific grant funding awards and the development of the corporate plan for the coming year. This can impact on the ability of officers to develop, plan and implement larger projects. While 82% of a £1.1m capital programme was delivered during the year, some in-year capital funding opportunities offered by the Welsh Government could not be taken up due to staff capacity issues in the Nature Recovery and Land Management team. Development of a costed multi-year prioritised programme of potential capital projects will be a key focus of the incoming Leadership Team. This would enable BBNPA to respond more effectively to funding opportunities.</p>
Performance management and objective setting	<p>BBNPA has had significant capacity issues in 2020-21 following the departure of a key officer who has not been replaced. This, coupled with the expiry of the Ffynnon system, has led to interim reporting methods by remaining officers to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis, and a permanent solution will be addressed in 2021-22. This will align corporate performance through from the National Park Management Plan and Corporate Plan. Staff appraisals will also be reviewed to better align with this. The cyber-security attack has impacted on this area of work and it is acknowledged that it is an areas that is being strengthened.</p>
Internal Audit	<p>A review of progress on internal audit recommendations for 2020-21 was presented to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 7 May 2021 by BBNPA's internal auditors TIAA. This acknowledged the lack of capacity, particularly in relation to senior management and performance reporting but recognised that BBNPA had complied with its statutory obligations. It identified that 10 recommendations had been implemented, 6 were in progress and one was no longer applicable.</p>
External Audit	<p>Audit Wales carried out a review of resilience during 2020-21, and changed the focus of this mid-term to BBNPA's Change Programme,</p>

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
	<p>which led to criticism of the process. This was presented to BBNPA on 17 February 2021 and an action plan subsequently agreed. The statutory recommendations in the report will continue to be addressed in 2021-22 and remain a corporate priority.</p>

Principle 5: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
Member Development	<p>During COVID-19 BBNPA has focused on delivering some core development on Welsh language and culture, equality and diversity and information governance/data protection.</p> <p>Two-thirds of members completed a Personal Development Review and some training requests were noted to be delivered in 2021-22. BBNPA is committed to achieving full compliance with the PDR process in 2021-22 in order to support succession planning and ensure that members maximise their contribution to the running of BBNPA.</p> <p>Two members appointed in April 2020 received online induction and also attended a three day National Parks UK Member Induction Course in March 2021 (delivered to all English and Welsh Parks by the Brecon Beacons NPA under a Service Level Agreement). During the year a number of members stepped into a leadership gap which while necessary at the time, has caused some blurring of roles and responsibilities. This was picked up by Audit Wales in their report and is reflected in the recommendations and action plan.</p>
Change Programme	<p>The Audit Wales review included statutory recommendations on clarification of the member role. The Governance and Member Development Working Group led a Board Effectiveness Survey, the conclusions of which have been used to inform the Audit Wales Action Plan. Democratic Services officers have supported and progressed this work.</p>
Member Attendance	<p>Average 78% at main meetings (actual figure much higher as this is skewed by one member being absent for much of the year due to personal circumstances). Attendance has increased during this period of virtual meetings.</p>
Remote Meetings	<p>BBNPA moved swiftly to online meetings and made Changes to Standing Orders to accommodate this. Guidance and training was given to all members but there have been challenges not only with meeting platforms but with connectivity for those members living in remote areas. A significant amount of additional time from Democratic Services was allocated to supporting members with remote working, and also to exploring technological solutions for future hybrid meetings, working with Welsh Government, WLGA and UK National Parks.</p>
Staff Appraisals and training	<p>A system is in place for staff performance reviews, but this is currently inconsistent across all sections of BBNPA and needs review in 2021-22 in order to develop a system appropriate for all staff and linked to strategic plans. One of the key challenges in the last 18 months has been staff capacity and morale and this is a major risk to the Authority</p>

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
	<p>ensuring it has an effective and well supported workforce. It has been identified as a significant governance risk for 2021-22.</p> <p>Staff have been supported during COVID-19 by HR and managers, with ongoing advice on counselling and mental health. Wellbeing has been made the main focus, aside from team meetings, a Friday kitchen catch up for all staff to drop in online was set up and further weekly online yoga sessions. We worked closely with Brecon Mind whom also provided invaluable one to one support for staff who required assistance which also complemented our confidential counselling service. Two surveys have been carried out to check staff wellbeing and their views on home working, now and in the future. This will inform discussion on options for future office accommodation.</p> <p>Staff Training – whilst face to face training was on hold during the Covid-19 lockdown, BBNPA managed to continue staff training as much as possible. BBNPA utilise the ELMS Online Training system used by all UK National Parks and rolled out training covering Data protection, cyber security, GDPR training and a number of health and Safety specific courses. Staff were also able to complete courses relevant to their roles contained on the system. BBNPA supported a number of managers in project management training, presentation skills, etc. We continue to support staff in learning Welsh using the online training on workplace Welsh with a number of staff completed the first level of training.</p> <p>Our volunteers have also managed to continue development in navigations skills, etc.</p> <p>With restriction lifting we have started to resume first aid training and have planned training specific to our wardens 4 X 4 training, plant training and chainsaw refreshers.</p>
Senior Leadership	<p>As a consequence of the delay to a planned management restructure during 2020-21, there were significant gaps in capacity, filled on an interim basis by more junior staff. Towards the end of the year, the departure of the Chief Executive was announced and an interim Transition Director was appointed. Senior vacancies and turnover impacted on the resilience and capacity of BBNPA as evidenced by the Audit Wales resilience review. During 2021-22 BBNPA has reached key milestones in beginning to recover senior capacity, including the appointment of the current Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer and the approval of a revised leadership structure.</p>

Principle 6: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
Statement of Accounts	<p>Draft Statement of Accounts for 2020-21 presented to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 23 July 2021 and is published on BBNPA's website. Audit of these accounts is in progress and provides a high standard of external assurance on the Statement.</p>
Budget Setting	<p>Budget for 2020-21 approved by BBNPA on 11 February 2020. Quarterly financial reports are made to Audit and Scrutiny Committee.</p>

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances						
	All financial decisions are taken in the public domain (except those deemed to be exempt under the Local Government Act 1972).						
Financial Management Code	The Code, in its 2020/21 'shadow year' provides a strong framework for self-assessment and improvement against a suite of principles which cover all aspects of good financial management in local authorities. An initial review of compliance has been carried out, using a RAG rating to indicate priority areas for further improvement.						
Risk Management	The expiry of the Ffynnon performance system and the impact of the cyber-security attack in September 2020 has led to interim arrangements being put in place for identifying risks, mitigation and reporting on these to Audit and Scrutiny Committee. BBNPA recognises the need to address this in 2021-22 but the Corporate Management Team has reviewed risk and legal risks regularly during the year.						
External Audit	Audit Wales presented their 2020 Audit Plan to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 24 July 2020 and set out the project brief for the Resilience Audit (the focus of this changed mid-term as outlined above).						
Internal Audit	<p>TIAA presented their annual audit strategy for 2020-21 to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 24 July 2020 and officers reported on progress on a quarterly basis. Key audit areas in the year were a rolling review of financial controls, wellbeing strategy and absence management, ICT strategy and performance management.</p> <p>During the year there were changes to the Internal Audit Plan as a result of a cyber-attack in September 2020. An additional three days was added to the planned ICT Strategy review. The scope of the Governance – Performance Management review was changed to provide a high level review of performance monitoring arrangements and the number of days reduced to reflect the change. Both changes approved by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>From the reviews carried out in 2020-21 the following recommendations were made (20219-20 figures in brackets):</p> <table border="0" data-bbox="576 1552 1106 1626"> <tr> <td>Urgent</td> <td>Important</td> <td>Routine</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0 (0)</td> <td>7 (13)</td> <td>4 (14)</td> </tr> </table> <p>At the meeting on 7 May 2021 TIAA presented their annual report for 2020-21 and reported: “TIAA is satisfied that, for the areas reviewed during the year, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority has reasonable and effective risk management, control and governance processes in place”.</p> <p>There were no areas reviewed by internal audit where it was assessed that the effectiveness of some of the internal control arrangements provided 'limited' or 'no assurance'. The internal audit contract was extended to provide continuity in the light of the management changes then underway and the impact of Covid on the way in which auditors were able to operate.</p>	Urgent	Important	Routine	0 (0)	7 (13)	4 (14)
Urgent	Important	Routine					
0 (0)	7 (13)	4 (14)					


How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
Managing data	<p>A Data Protection Policy is in place and there is a designated Data Protection Officer.</p> <p>Modern.gov electronic committee system is used to produce agendas and minutes which give online access to officers, members and the public, including archived agendas.</p> <p>Internal information management has been challenging following the cyber-security attack and whilst most data was recovered, there is significant work for officers in sorting data transferred to online storage. This work is hampered by lack of staff capacity.</p>

Principle 7: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

How we are meeting these principles	Reviews, Improvements and Assurances
Pay Policy Statement	During the year, the pay policy statement for the previous year was reported to BBNPA and published. The statement for 2020/21 is in preparation.
Broadcasting meetings	BBNPA livestreams and archives all its Authority, Planning and Audit & Scrutiny meetings, with almost all decisions taken in the public domain (except those deemed exempt under the Local Government Act 1972). Its public speaking scheme has continued to operate during COVID-19.
Informed decision making	Following work done by the Governance and Member Development Working Group officers have made their reports for decision more concise, evidence based and accessible to all. Members have acknowledged and welcomed this.
Annual Governance Statement	This is prepared annually. This report for 2020-21 has been delayed by capacity issues but will be published with the final Statement of Accounts. Members will be consulted through the Governance and Member Development Working Group and presented to BBNPA on 24 September 2021.
Audit Reports	Wherever possible these are presented in the public domain to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, together with progress reports.
Annual Report	The draft Annual Report for 2019-20 was presented to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 23 October 2020.


3.0 Accountability and Action Plans

Report on actions taken in 2020-21 to address significant issues identified in previous year's Annual Governance Statement.

Issue		Outcome	Lead Officer	Update on Progress
1. Reduced size of Authority	a) To implement the legislation and review impact on governance b) To make any changes to the Scheme of Delegation to support this c) Provide additional member development as needed	Effective decision making with appropriate participation from all members and appropriate delegation to officers No adverse effect on delivery of objectives	Democratic Services Manager	Impact has been mitigated in part by the move to virtual meetings which has facilitated attendance at meetings and training events. Changes to nomination procedures for key roles to encourage members to maximise their contributions has had limited impact.
2. Future Funding	As part of National Parks Wales to seek an integrated and longer term approach to funding opportunities for protected landscapes	More financial certainty to achieve objectives	CEO and Management Team	The three Welsh NPAs worked with Welsh Government to secure a 10% increase in funding for 2021-22, which has also resulted in additional funding under the SLSP programme. The increase has eased budgetary pressure in the short-term but will need to be maintained to allow multi-year projects to be effective
3. Implementation and review of Change	a) Implement staff changes b) Refocus Corporate Plan	Delivery of integrated outcomes across focus areas	CEO and Management Team	COVID-19 and gaps in leadership have impacted on the delivery of the Change

Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Changes to Scheme of Delegation d) Officer and member training 			<p>Programme, with a significant impact on staff capacity and morale. Staff posts were made redundant or vacated through resignations on the resumption of the programme. The departure of the CEO and the need to recruit a successor and delay the appointment of a senior leadership team has created further capacity issues. The new CEO commenced July 2021 and there are positive indications that the situation will improve but there will be delays due to recruitment timetables.</p>
4. COVID-19	<p>Review impact of COVID-19 on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Wellbeing of Staff and Members b) Resources c) Ways of working d) Delivery of objectives e) Accommodation needs f) Lifestyle and culture 	A more resilient organisation	CEO and Management Team	<p>Two staff surveys have been carried out. Staff have adapted well to remote working and many, though not all, have expressed a preference for a hybrid model in future, which will inform options for future accommodation. An assessment of potential staffing/team models will need to be carried out to maintain efficient delivery in future.</p>

4.0 Action Plan to address significant governance issues in 2021-22

Action Plan for 2021-22 to address significant issues identified in the Review of Effectiveness 2020-21				
Issue		Outcome	Lead Officer	To be completed by
1. Build Staff Capacity and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Appoint Senior Leadership Team b) Fill additional gaps in structure and capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides strategic direction • More effective delivery of objectives • Improved staff morale 	CEO	31 March 2022
2. Implement Audit Wales Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Continue to deliver improvements and monitor progress; b) Review Scheme of Delegation to clarify and improve strategic and operational decision making 	Audit Wales sign off on audit plan and confirm improvements, supported by the use of surveys	CEO	31 March 2022
3. Performance and Risk Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Apply effective system for monitoring performance linked from NPMP and Corporate Plan b) Review staff appraisal system to align with this c) Apply effective system for identifying, mitigating and reporting risk 	<p>A cohesive performance appraisal system that links strategic plans and annual corporate plans to staff performance.</p> <p>An effective system in place for risk management allowing mitigating actions to be developed and recorded</p>	CEO / Monitoring Officer / HR Officer	31 March 2022
4. Impact of Phosphate issue on the Local Development Plan and the wider work of BBNPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Continue to work with Welsh Government, NRW and partners to develop a phosphates plan; b) Produce a guidance note for planning applicants, agents and the public to help them understand the phosphates issue. 	A timetable for the completion of the LDP can be set.	CEO / Head of Planning / Strategy & Policy Manager	<p>May 2022 (to finalise a phosphate plan with Welsh Government)</p> <p>31 December 2021</p>

5. Conclusion

The Authority is committed to monitoring its governance framework through its Governance and Member Development Working Group and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee. It will actively manage and monitor the implementation of improvements following identification of the significant governance issues highlighted above and report back on these in the Annual Governance Statement for 2021-22.

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