

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Code of Corporate Governance



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I.0 Introduction

The 1995 Environment Act specifies that the purposes of a National Park Authority are

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the park area
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public.

The Act also states that in pursuing these purposes the Authority has a duty to seek to foster the social and economic well being of local communities.

The National Park Authority is committed to the principles of good corporate governance in delivering its statutory purposes. Through the development, adoption and continued implementation and monitoring of a Code of Corporate Governance the Authority formally confirms its ongoing commitment and intentions. The Code of Corporate Governance is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2007) and its addendum published in 2012.*

The Code of Corporate Governance comprehensively describes the Authority's commitment to and understanding of corporate governance, and outlines the arrangements that it has put in place to ensure ongoing effective implementation and monitoring.

The Code of Corporate Governance includes a signed statement of assurance by the Chair and Chief Executive that the principles are embedded in the governance of the Authority and supported by all Members and Officers.

The Code of Corporate Governance incorporates the sustainable development principles and the goals set out in the *Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015*. Accordingly our decision making processes will ensure that we keep the following principles at the heart of planning and delivering our work in order to contribute to the Wellbeing Goals.

Sustainable Development Principles

- Long term
- Integration
- Collaboration
- Involvement
- Prevention

Wellbeing Goals

- A Prosperous Wales
- A Resilient Wales
- A Healthier Wales
- A More Equal Wales
- A Wales of Cohesive Communities
- A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language

- A Globally Responsible Wales

1.1 Why adopt a Code of Corporate Governance?

Adopting a Code of Corporate Governance is a way in which the National Park Authority recognises the fact that effective local government relies upon establishing and maintaining the confidence of local people in both Members and Authority officials. Good corporate governance underpins credibility and confidence in the leadership and forms the foundation from which all Authority services are provided.

Adopting, monitoring and complying with a Code of Corporate Governance helps enhance the Authority's legitimacy and increases trust placed in the Authority by local people, visitors, partners and stakeholders.

Strong, transparent and responsive governance enables the National Park Authority to put citizens first by pursuing its aims and priorities effectively, supported by appropriate mechanisms for managing performance and risk. In order to maintain citizens' confidence, these mechanisms must be sound and seen to be sound.

Overall, adopting and committing to this Code of Corporate Governance puts in place a basis for an Authority wide commitment to the way in which it intends to fulfill its role in leading and representing the community, providing opportunities for all, ensuring that there is a strong customer focus in all the Authority does.

1.2 What is Corporate Governance?

Corporate Governance is a phrase used to describe how organisations direct and control what they do and good Corporate Governance requires local authorities to carry out their services in a way that demonstrates accountability, openness and honesty, and which takes the needs of local communities into account.

The National Park Authority sees Corporate Governance as doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises the systems and processes, and also the culture and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and how it accounts to and engages with its stakeholders.

1.3 Why do we need a Code of Corporate Governance?

Nationally governance weaknesses have led to service failure and, on occasion, to tragedies. High performing organisations, on the other hand, have effective governance arrangements.

The public's trust increases when the quality of services that they and their families experience is high, and when organisations are seen to be open and honest in communicating their performance, and in learning from their mistakes.

The Code of Governance is based upon the following six Principles as defined by CIPFA and SOLACE and incorporates the Making the Connections governance principles and values as set out by the Welsh Government (WG). These are shown in italics.

1. Focusing on the Authority's purpose and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area; (*Putting the Citizen First*); (*Achieving Value for Money*).
2. Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles; (*Knowing Who Does What and Why*);
3. Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour; (*Living Public Service Values*);
4. Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk; (*Fostering Innovation Delivery*);
5. Developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective; (*Being a Learning Organisation*);
6. Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability; (*Engaging with Others*);

This Code describes how the Authority will meet and demonstrate its commitment to good Corporate Governance in relation to these six Principles, how it will carry this out and who will monitor and review the governance arrangements.

2.0 The Authority's Corporate Governance Principles

Principle 1

Focusing on the Authority's purposes and duty, on outcomes for the community including citizens and service users and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.

WG – *Putting the Citizen First – Achieving Value for Money* “Good governance means focusing on people's needs and experiences, making the organisation's purpose the delivery of a high quality service” – “Good Governance means looking after taxpayers' resources properly, and using them carefully to deliver high quality, efficient services”.

The Authority's purposes and duty are set out by the Environment Act (1995) and the shared vision for the Park is set out in the National Park Management Plan. The Authority will ensure that users receive a high quality of service whether delivered directly, in

partnership or by commissioning. The Authority will ensure that it makes best use of resources and that taxpayers and service users receive excellent value for money. In pursuance of this:-

The Authority will meet all statutory requirements on reporting of activities, performance and the Authority's financial position in a timely and understandable format by:

- Producing an annual Corporate Plan and reporting on its delivery;
- Externally audited accounts (including the Annual Governance Statement);
- Independently verified performance information.
- Details of projects and activities through the press and other media

The Authority is required to review its National Park Management Plan every five years.

The Authority will aim to deliver high quality services that provide value for money and it will achieve this by:

- Delivering services to meet the needs of its various communities, customers and stakeholders, and putting in place processes to ensure that they operate sustainably, efficiently, effectively and economically in practice;
- Carrying out customer surveys and other market research,
- Allocating resources to meet corporate objectives;
- Developing effective relationships and partnerships with other public sector agencies and the private and voluntary sectors.
- Responding appropriately to the findings and recommendations of Internal and External Auditors and Statutory Inspectors and putting in place arrangements for the implementation of agreed actions;
- Comparing information about our services with services provided by similar organisations and assessing why levels of efficiency, effectiveness and quality are different elsewhere.

Principle 2

Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose, with clearly defined functions and roles.

WG – Knowing Who Does What and Why

“Good governance means that everyone involved in delivering a service understands each other’s roles and responsibilities and how together they will deliver the best possible outcomes”.

Effective leadership requires clarity regarding roles of the Authority Members and respect and recognition for an appropriate scrutiny function. In addition to this, a constructive working relationship between Members and staff, and mutual respect for each of these respective roles is vital. Finally the Authority needs to ensure that stakeholders understand our role and the levels of service they can expect.

The Authority will ensure that the necessary roles and responsibilities for the governance of the Authority are identified and allocated so that it is clear who is accountable for decisions that are made. Members have role description for all their roles.

The Authority will achieve this by having in place Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation and reviewing and updating these as needed.

Principle 3

Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.

WG – Living Public Service Values

“Good governance means creating a team that can do the job well, whose behaviours are rooted in public service values”.

High standards of conduct and effective governance can only be achieved if those who hold public office have the highest standards of behaviour and encourage others to do so.

The Authority will adopt a culture of behaviour based on shared values, ethical principles and good conduct.

The Authority will achieve this by establishing and keeping under review:

- A Member Code of Conduct;
- An Officer Code of Conduct,
- A Member Officer Protocol
- Registers of Interests, Hospitality and Gifts
- Contract Procedural Rules and Financial Standards
- An Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Whistleblowing Policy.
- Ensuring that regular member development sessions are delivered on aspects of the Code of Conduct

Principle 4

Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.

WG – Fostering Innovative Delivery

“Good governance means being creative and innovative in the delivery of public services – working from evidence, and taking managed risks to achieve better outcomes”.

Informed decision-making is a fundamental part of good corporate governance. It requires Authorities to be both rigorous in their examination of options but also open to consider representation and views from all sectors of the community.

Code of Corporate Governance – Reviewed and approved by NPA 9 April 2019

The Authority will ensure that its decision making process is based on the best available evidence and includes a detailed risk assessment including;

- Financial, legal and human resources implications (authors of reports will be accountable if they are providing advice themselves);
- Single integrated assessment for major items;
- Risks and controlling actions.

The Authority will be open and honest about how decisions are taken and recorded.

The Authority will achieve this by:

- Ensuring that decision-making reports include advice from all statutory officers and explain the background in an open and transparent way.
- Recording all decisions that are made by Committees or delegated to officers and making the details publicly available other than those deemed exempt under the Local Government Act 1972.
- Having rules and procedures which show how decisions are made;
- Developing and maintaining an effective scrutiny function which encourages constructive challenge;

The Authority will have a Risk Management Strategy and will operate a risk management system that supports the achievement of its corporate aims and priorities, protects the Authority's reputation, finances and other assets and is compliant with statutory and regulatory obligations.

The Authority will ensure that the risk management system:

- Formally identifies and manages risks;
- Involves Members and officers in the risk management process;
- Links risks to financial and other key internal controls;
- Incorporates service and business continuity planning;
- Reviews and, if necessary, updates its risk management processes at least annually.

Principle 5

Developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective.

WG – Being a Learning Organisation

“Good governance means always learning and always improving service delivery”.

Ensuring that Members and officers have the necessary skills to operate and manage the organisation is an important aspect of governance.

The Authority will ensure that those responsible for the governance of the Authority have the skills, knowledge and experience they need to perform well.

The Authority will achieve this by:

- Implementing a Member Development Strategy;
- Developing leadership skills and capacity across the Authority;
- Developing and maintaining the Performance Management Review process for officers;
- Developing and maintaining the Personal Development Interview process for Members
- Ensuring information is relayed to Members and officers to enable them to carry out their roles

Principle 6

Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

WG – Engaging with Others

“Good governance means ensuring that the views and contributions of staff, the public and partner agencies are sought and harnessed to achieve the best possible outcomes”.

Local authorities not only have to do things in the right way, but have to face the additional challenge of being seen to do things in the right way. This requires full engagement with local people where appropriate through a process which is planned and resourced in a way that is fair.

The Authority will seek and respond to the views of stakeholders and the Community.

The Authority will achieve this by:

- Forming and maintaining relationships with the leaders of other organisations;
- Providing and supporting ways for the public to present community concerns to the Authority,
- Engaging in consultation in a meaningful way and through mechanisms which seek to capture the views of all relevant interested parties.
- Working with other public sector partners to help customers and stakeholders understand our respective responsibilities and what we aim to achieve by working in partnership.
- Maintaining and reviewing an effective complaints procedure.

3.0 Monitoring and Review

Good Corporate Governance requires:

- The active participation of Members and officers across the Authority,
- Development, implementation and continuous improvement of the Authority's Corporate Governance culture.
- Preparation, adoption and maintenance of an up-to-date Code of Corporate Governance, including arrangements for ensuring its implementation and review.
- Preparation of the Annual Governance Statement.
- Promotion of best practice in Corporate Governance throughout the Authority.

The Authority is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the Authority's Corporate Governance arrangements.

The Authority will ensure that these arrangements are kept under continual review by:

- The work of Internal and External Audit;
- Reports prepared by managers with responsibility for aspects of this Code;
- Other review agencies and Inspectorates.

4.0 The Annual Governance Statement

Each Year the Authority will publish an Annual Governance Statement, which will provide an overall assessment of the Authority's Corporate Governance arrangements and an appraisal of the key controls in place to manage the Authority's key governance risks.

The Statement will also provide details of where improvements need to be made.

The Annual Governance Statement will be reviewed by the Corporate Governance Team and approved by the Authority, prior to being signed by the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Executive.

The Annual Governance Statement will be published simultaneously with the Authority's Annual Statement of Accounts and will be audited by our External Auditors.

Signed



Ed Evans (Chair)



Julian Atkins (Chief Executive)

Appendix I

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Committee Structure

National Park Authority

All 24 Members, meets 8 times per year plus an Annual General Meeting

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

9 Members, meets 4 times per year

Planning, Access and Rights of Way Committee

21 Members, meets every 8 weeks

Standards Committee

3 NPA Members and 3 externally appointed Members, meets at least once a year

Policy Forum

All Members, meets monthly.

Other working groups, advisory forums and task and finish groups

The Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation are regularly reviewed and updated and can be found on the Authority's website: [Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation](#)

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Governance Policies

Policy Title	Reviews
National Park Management Plan	2015-20 Plan currently being reviewed
Local Development Plan	Adopted 2013 – currently being reviewed
Corporate Plan	Annual
Statement of Accounts	Annual
Standing Orders	Reviewed and amended June 2017
Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation	Reviewed and amended September 2018
Members' Code of Conduct	Revised code adopted June 2016
Member Officer Protocol	Reviewed July 2017
Planning Protocol	Reviewed July and amended April 2019
Employee Code of Conduct	Reviewed and adopted Dec 2015
Disability Equality Scheme	Replaced by Equality Act
Financial Regulations	Reviewed and updated December 2018
Welsh Language Standards	Annual Report submitted to Authority and Welsh Language Commission
Publication Scheme	Reviewed and approved 2015
Freedom of Information Policy	2010 No changes
Data Protection Policy	Reviewed 2018
Health & Safety Policy	Reviewed regularly by Thomas Carroll
IT User Policy	Reviewed 2018
Records Management Policy	Currently under review
Business Continuity Strategy & Plan	Plan maintained as living document, strategy to be reviewed Date TBC
Procurement Policy	Superseded by Welsh Government Procurement Policy with which the Authority has to comply
Standing Orders Relating to Contracts	Reviewed and amended April 2016 to comply with the EU Public Procurement Directive
Gender Equality Duty	Replaced by Equality Act