

INTRODUCTION

This initial Self Assessment Questionnaire is issued by the Scottish Executive to assist public service organisations (PSOs) in considering how to secure their Best Value duties. It has been prepared in discussions with the Best Value in Public Services External Reference Group and Audit Scotland. The Questionnaire is issued to Accountable Officers and their organisations to use on a discretionary basis - there is no compulsion from either the Scottish Executive or Audit Scotland in this process. However, it is hoped that many PSOs will find it useful in reflecting upon continuous improvement, and the Scottish Executive encourages some form of self-Assessment to enable PSOs to prepare for annual Assessment of performance against Best Value by the Auditor General for Scotland ¹.

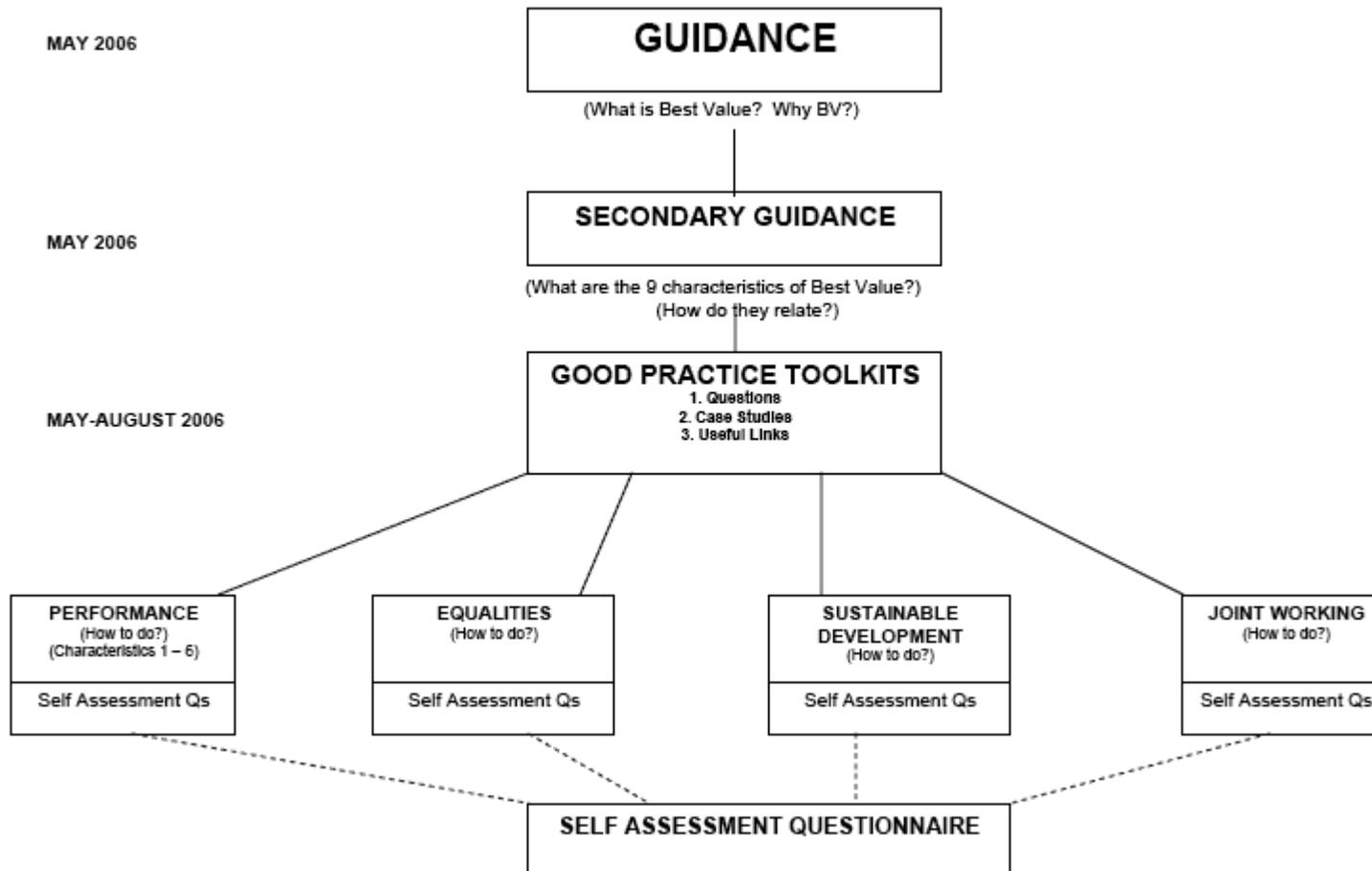
The Questionnaire should be read in conjunction with the Best Value in Public Services Guidance to Accountable Officers and Secondary Guidance, which explain the duty of Best Value and its nine characteristics. Toolkits containing links to useful information and case studies on each of the nine characteristics of Best Value will be issued electronically by the Scottish Executive during summer 2006, and will also assist PSOs in responding to the self Assessment questions. The diagram below illustrates the relationship between these layers of Guidance and the Toolkits.

The Scottish Executive considers self-Assessment to be a first step in assisting PSOs to pursue continuous improvement. It is not an end in itself, and completion of the questionnaire does not suggest that an organisation has achieved Best Value. Rather, the Scottish Executive would encourage PSOs to use the findings from the questionnaire to help set out plans, strategies, targets and outcomes that will drive forward continuous improvement.

The process by which PSOs consider and complete the questionnaire should, of course, be proportionate to the scale of the organisation and its capacity. Smaller organisations in particular should not feel compelled to answer all of the questions, especially if they require a level of detail which does not seem appropriate to the scale of activity. Larger PSOs, on the other hand, may benefit from a more thorough approach. Benchmarking with other PSOs, sharing knowledge and joint working would all be useful in this process, as would discussing findings with sponsoring teams and departments within the Scottish Executive.

This Self Assessment Questionnaire is issued in initial form, and the Scottish Executive would welcome feedback from PSOs who have completed the Questionnaire on its utility, relevance, and how it might be improved in future. PSOs are also encouraged to adapt and modify the document to better suit their own unique circumstances and approach to continuous improvement. There will be further opportunities to update the Questionnaire in future, and the Scottish Executive wishes to continue the sense of ownership and partnership on Best Value from which it has been created.

1. Please note that the questions in bold are identical to those used in Audit Scotland's 2006 baseline review of the arrangements that are in place to secure Best Value in Public Services



COMMITMENT AND LEADERSHIP

High Level Questions to consider:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation demonstrate a commitment to delivering better public services and functions year on year? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Plan sets out organisational commitment to ongoing improvement in services. Cross-cutting themes of sustainability; economy, efficiency and effectiveness; and a Park for all (equality) reinforce the commitment to improve services and provision within the National Park set out in the 5 strategic themes. This commitment reinforced through leadership in development and delivery of the National Park Plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how the organisation has developed a mission statement, vision and values for the organisation. How have Executive and Non-Executive leaders and senior managers been involved in that process? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Plan and 5 strategic themes in particular drawn up after a series of staff workshops to develop bottom-up view of 3 year vision for organisation, along with Board discussions to give top-down perspective. Organisational values developed and reviewed through open away day discussions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have senior managers implemented this mission and vision, and communicated this throughout the organisation? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Operational Plans developed and delivery monitored in detail. Communications through regular Group meetings, all staff meetings, away days, and written updates / reports accessible to all staff. Organisational values documented and discussed / reinforced.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation demonstrate a commitment to high standards of 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Regulations and wider system of internal control developed and implemented, reinforced by Corporate Services Group at officer level; Finance and Audit Committees at Board

<p>probity and propriety?</p>	<p>level; and independently by well established internal and external audit services. Organisational values of transparency and openness support demonstration of probity and propriety.</p>
<p>Overall Summary Conclusion</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, at what stage is the organisation in developing arrangements for this characteristic of Best Value? 	
<p>Not yet covered Under Development In Place/Improvements Required Good Practice Fully Embedded</p>	
<p>Detailed Questions to consider</p>	<p>Current Position and Evidence Identified</p>
<p>Strategy and Vision</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are Executive and Non-Executive leaders involved in setting clear direction and organisational strategy? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direction and Strategy documented through Corporate, Operational and National Park Plans. Decision and discussion papers at Board and Management Team level agree strategy within these plans. Written reports update progress: Operational Plan monitoring reports and Corporate Plan “theme” reports. Board and MT processes open to staff through attendance / meeting notes. Monthly staff meetings and regular away days give ongoing strategic leadership.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are strategic priorities agreed, reviewed, and updated on a regular basis? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Plan fully revised every three years (and more regularly if changing circumstances required). Operational Plan agreed every year by Board through process reviewing and updating strategic priorities. Management Team closely involved in all processes and in disseminating this information through organisation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do leaders communicate the strategy and ensure that it is translated into meaningful action? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Operational Plans developed and delivery monitored in detail. Communications through regular Group meetings, all staff meetings, away days, and written updates / reports accessible to all staff.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well developed performance appraisal and target setting processes ensure operational plans, and through that overall strategy, is translated into meaningful targets/work plans for all staff. Ensures all staff also understand and appreciate their role within the organisation and their contribution to strategic delivery.
<p>Plans and Practices</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do leaders ensure that staff and stakeholders understand the overall direction of the organisation? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For staff, as with communication of strategy and vision above. <p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For stakeholders, well developed communication channels established in process of developing National Park Plan. Board members and managers active in engaging with stakeholders, explaining overall direction of organisation. High level, strategic cooperation formalised through Panel for Joined Up Government. Work with stakeholder also takes place through a variety of existing groups, with a variety of status/linkages to the Authority, and supported by the organisation in some way: e.g. Local Outdoor Access Forum, Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce, Visit Forum, All Abilities Group. Further formalisation of stakeholder working in progress through NPP delivery arrangements, to be finalised June 2007.
<p>Leadership</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do leader's behaviours demonstrate Best Value characteristics? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2006 staff survey shows generally positive view of organisational leadership. <p>[Somewhat difficult to evidence in itself, but is presumably reflected in evidence throughout remainder of the self-assessment: if organisation shows best value characteristics, it will be in large part because leadership demonstrates those characteristics.]</p>

<p>Public standards</p>	
<p>Does the organisation have and implement appropriate codes of conduct for all staff, directors and trustees?</p>	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For staff, staff handbook put in place December 2004, with ongoing revision since then in conjunction with the Staff Consultative Forum and Board’s Staffing and Recruitment Committee. Currently under full review, with revised handbook to be issued around June 2007. • Complaints Procedures, Freedom Information Guidance, Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures all in place and backed up by appropriate HR and other experienced staff to assist in their implementation. • Staff Code of Conduct to be developed during 2007. <p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members’ Code of Conduct in place and approved by Standards Commission and Ministers November 2004. Significant training requirement anticipated during 2007/08 with change in a number of Board members.
<p>SOUND GOVERNANCE AT A STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL LEVEL</p> <p>High Level Questions to consider:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways does the organisation ensure that service delivery and policy development is directed and supported through its corporate planning process? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate and Operational Plans set direction for service delivery and are monitored in detail, using a risk management based framework. Quarterly monitoring review at Management Team and Board level.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation align its plans and detailed targets with available resources? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget allocations built into Operational Plans at development phase, with allocations linked back to overall Corporate/strategic objectives. Prioritisation of budget allocations considered by Management Team and Board. • Operational Plans developed with staff resource availability in mind, although time allocations not always made explicit in finalising plans.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What key indicators has the organisation developed to monitor the delivery of its strategic objectives? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced scorecard indicators monitor overall organisational performance/ “health” and provide high level overview of delivery of priority Corporate Plan Goals. • Operational Plan activities monitored to determine overall progress in attaining strategic, Corporate Plan milestones. From 2006/07, performance measures identified for each Operational Plan activity to improve monitoring, reporting and performance management. Future development around ongoing improvement in focus on agreed key performance indicators. • Emerging NPP activity plans.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation identify, monitor and address performance issues using these key indicators and target? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All performance monitoring undertaken using a risk-based approach, and conducted at least quarterly with review at Board and Management Team level. • Variations from target highlighted, exception reports generated and any issues arising reported to and considered by Board, Committee and Management Team. Recognition of any significant strategic issues in updated Risk Register.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation promote continuous improvement through performance management? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership from Board and Management Team level on importance of performance review and performance management, supported by production of and reliance on detailed quarterly

	monitoring reports. Exception reports used to highlight any areas at additional risk of non-delivery and act as a focus for improvement in these areas.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does Performance Management link with Risk Management to support prioritisation and decision-making at Executive level? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Risk Register in place, which links directly to delivery of Corporate Plan objectives. Reviewed and updated regularly by Audit Committee and Management Team. All performance monitoring undertaken using a risk-based approach, and conducted at least quarterly with review at Board and Management Team level. 					
Overall Summary Conclusion						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, at what stage is the organisation in developing arrangements for this characteristic of Best Value? 						
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Detailed Questions to consider	Current Position and Evidence Identified					
Strategy						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the organisation have defined corporate objectives, strategic priorities with clear lines of accountability for delivery? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined objectives set in Corporate Plan, and delivered through Operational Plan which sets out clear accountability for delivery. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the organisation determine the most efficient and effective approach to service delivery? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic discussions held at both Board and Management Team level. Operational efficiency and effectiveness steered by Action Planning and Expenditure Justification processes, with scrutiny at officer and member level. 					

<p>Plans and Processes</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the financial and resource planning process link appropriately to corporate objectives and strategic priorities? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational and budget planning processes links financial resources directly to Corporate Objectives / strategic priorities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do plans consider the use of all resources (staff, ICT, project assets, capital)? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans only explicitly link financial, and potentially staff, resources to delivery of objectives. Need to consider cost/benefit and overall risk benefit of additional work required to explicitly link other resource elements to delivery.
<p>Performance</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a coherent Performance Management Framework within the organisation linking Corporate Objectives and priorities to operational service and individual objectives? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Operational Plans developed and delivery monitored in detail. Well developed performance appraisal and target setting processes ensure operational plans, and through that overall strategy, is translated into meaningful targets/work plans for all staff. Ensures all staff also understand and appreciate their role within the organisation and their contribution to strategic delivery.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is performance management supported by clearly identified measures and key 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balanced scorecard indicators monitor overall organisational performance/ "health" and provide high level overview of delivery of priority Corporate Plan Goals.

<p>performance indicators?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are performance measures and outcome-focused key performance indicators identified? Who is involved? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Plan milestones/outcomes agreed by Board on basis of Management Team recommendations and following Corporate Plan development steps set out in commitment and leadership section. Balanced scorecard measures agreed by relevant Committee and Management Team. Operational plan performance measures developed by project managers and endorsed by Management Team.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are quantitative indicators SMART and robust? What role does qualitative measurement play? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balanced scorecard measures on the whole are quantitative and SMART. Many other measures are qualitative, which is currently inevitable given stage of organisational development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is performance information used? How is performance reported at the varying levels, e.g. internal, external, Board level and public? To what extent does it support and reinforce the ongoing Assessment of priorities and risk? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance information used in supporting Board's scrutiny role, in its consideration of organisational performance in delivery of strategic targets, at full Board meetings and also Committee meetings. Also used by Management Team to assess performance, consider resource allocation and (re)prioritisation. Reports to Board and Committee are also those used by Management Team and are all public documents, accessible by all staff and public. Exceptions highlighted in reports will inform development and review of strategic risk register, and operational risk assessment around delivery of objectives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is performance management data collected and used to support learning and performance 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational plan performance data linked into annual appraisal/performance review cycle. This to be supplemented by competency framework currently under development to focus staff development around key behavioural competencies.

<p>improvement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project post-implementation review currently under consideration by the Audit Committee and internal auditors, to support work undertaken in-house.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation learn from its own activities and those of others? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project post-implementation review currently under consideration by the Audit Committee and internal auditors, to support work undertaken in-house. • Advice and comment sought from a variety of stakeholder and partner groups with a variety of status/linkages to the Authority, and supported by the organisation in some way: e.g. Local Outdoor Access Forum, Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce, Visit Forum, All Abilities Group. • Further development of this area through NPP External Delivery Teams and implementation of other NPP delivery structures over course of 2007/08.

ACCOUNTABILITY

High Level Questions to consider

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation demonstrate a clarity of reporting structures, responsiveness and accessibility to all stakeholders? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of reporting through Operational Plan and Annual Reports following strategic structure established and set out in Corporate Plan. All documents and associated Board papers available to public: accessible through website and selected local authority offices in addition to provision by the Authority on request. • Authority works with and through a wide range of stakeholder groups in accessing and responding to stakeholder views. Very responsive to stakeholder views; highly developed consultative mechanisms in place.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways are stakeholders told about the quality of activities being delivered and what they can expect from the organisation in the future? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Park Plan sets out in some detail what can be expected from all partner organisations in the future. Work ongoing over 2006/07 in identifying what role the Authority will take in future delivery, and also that of all partner organisations. • Comprehensive range of information available, through open policy to documents, Board papers and meetings. Balance of qualitative and quantitative information, and range of information channels and media. • Still at relatively early stages of organisational delivery and no formal overview of adequacy of information provision.

Overall Summary Conclusion						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, at what stage is the organisation in developing arrangements for this characteristic of Best Value? 						
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Detailed questions to consider	Current Position and Evidence Identified					
Approach						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the organisation ensure that its approach to external accountability is supported by its governance arrangements? 	<p style="background-color: blue; color: white; margin: 0;">Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At a strategic / organisational level, “Open and Inclusive” are included within core organisational values underpinning all aspects of activity. All Board and Committee meetings are open to public, and all papers available Five of 25 Board members directly elected by Park residents. Key arrangements for accountability in place: external and independent internal audit functions; Audit Committee; Proper and Monitoring Officers; Standing Orders in place and Standards Officer. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the organisation identify and engage its stakeholders and how does it assess their needs for information on services and performance? 	<p style="background-color: yellow; margin: 0;">In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open, advertised public meetings both for Board business and policy consultation. Website contact forms Working with and through other partners, particularly local representative groups, e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Association of Community Councils, CRAGG Established joint Delivery Teams and Advisory Forums for Park Plan delivery, plus other statutory stakeholder participation such as Local Outdoor Access Forum. 					

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In process of developing more structured stakeholder analysis to inform and shape future activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the organisation ensure information on services and performance is accessible to all stakeholders? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Operational Plan Update and other performance monitoring papers are publicly available, and produced on a regular basis. Similarly, all papers on performance in delivering NPP actions will be publicly available.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the approach to engagement and providing information complement the diversity of the organisation's stakeholders? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range of information made available: formal Board papers, newsletters, website, email updates, Annual report, Corporate and Operational Plans, open meetings and pre-Board meetings. Open and inclusive approach to working with stakeholders seeks to ensure diversity in range of stakeholder groups is always recognised and engagement is with a representative stakeholder group. Authority is very flexible in responding to wishes from stakeholders to be involved in activities, e.g. establishment of NPP delivery teams and advisory forums.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the organisation ensure that stakeholders' views are heard, listened to and acted upon and how does it use stakeholder feedback and other performance information to drive continuous improvement? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive, open consultation undertaken on a wide range of policy and strategy development: National Park Plan, Local Plan, Outdoor Access Strategy, Core Path Plan, Equality Frameworks to give a few examples. Also open planning determination process, which takes account of feedback in determination. Feedback reported back in full and potential amendments in light of feedback considered. Operational Plan delivery closely monitored, through which corporate strategy maintained on-track.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk Management Strategy and Balanced Scorecard gives wider ongoing monitoring of organisational health and identifies areas for improvement. <p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of more established procedures to consider general feedback and consequent service improvement required. • Development of more formal service standards and KPI's linked into strategic outcomes required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation ensure its approach to giving and receiving information from stakeholders remains fit for purpose? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing "informal" evaluation through comments received in existing stakeholder groups, e.g. NPP delivery teams, advisory forums, open meetings. • Consideration of feedback forms and other unsolicited feedback.
Content	
Does the information provided cover all key aspects of the organisation's operations?	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insofar as all information is effectively publicly available, expectation is that all key aspects of operations are covered. No formal, structured review of information provision has taken place.
Does the information provided allow stakeholders to judge how efficiently and effectively the	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insofar as all information is effectively publicly available, expectation is that stakeholders can judge effectiveness and efficiency of organisation. No formal, structured review of information provision

<p>organisation is discharging its functions? What role does qualitative and quantitative information play in that process?</p>	<p>has taken place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance of quantitative information (e.g. balanced scorecard statistics, financial performance) and qualitative information (e.g. Operational Plan delivery assessment). • Development of more formal service standards and KPI's linked into strategic outcomes required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the information provided allow stakeholders to compare performance against: • [published] objectives, targets and service outcomes? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, delivery of published Corporate Plan goals and milestones / Operational Plan targets / NPP actions may be assessed against delivery reports produced.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ past performance? 	<p>Not generally applicable. Annual variation in organisational objectives and delivery targets does not lend itself to standard service statistics. Balanced scorecard statistics do give history of organisational performance over some standard measures over time.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ improvement plans? 	<p>Under Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Park Plan represents key improvement plan, with monitoring framework currently under development. <p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal improvement plan in place through establishment of register of internal audit recommendations and consequent management actions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ where relevant, the 	<p>Not applicable</p>

<p>performance of other bodies?</p>	
<p>Does the information provided allow stakeholders to judge how the organisation is likely to perform in future?</p>	<p>Not applicable. Huge variety of non-standard action in service delivery. Balanced scorecard statistics do give history of organisational performance over some standard measures over time.</p>

SOUND MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

High Level Questions to consider

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation keep a balance between cost, quality and price in making the best use of public resources including employees, ICT, land property and financial resources? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well developed budgeting processes, supported by structured expenditure justification tool and by Financial Regulations and guidance. Overall balance of resource allocation established to seek most appropriate delivery platform for Corporate and Operational plans, with consideration of balance of resource allocation between various elements undertaken at Board, Finance Committee and Management Team. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation manage procurement (and its contract management approach) to ensure that it is linked to achieving its objectives? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement requirements built into financial regulations and accompanying guidance. Overview of procurement activity centralised to seek to encourage consistency of application and promote best practice. All expenditure linked into delivery of agreed corporate and operational plans. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation demonstrate compliance with the principles of sound financial stewardship? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial regulations embedded within organisation to ensure compliance with SPFM, overseen by qualified, professional staff. Supported by appropriate internal audit and internal control processes, embedded risk management processes, Audit and Finance Committee review. 					
<p>Overall Summary Conclusion</p>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, at what stage is the organisation in developing arrangements for this characteristic of Best Value? <table border="1" data-bbox="286 1305 2038 1348"> <tr> <td>Not yet covered</td> <td>Under Development</td> <td>In Place/Improvements Required</td> <td>Good Practice</td> <td>Fully Embedded</td> </tr> </table>		Not yet covered	Under Development	In Place/Improvements Required	Good Practice	Fully Embedded
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Detailed Questions to consider	Current Position and Evidence Identified
<p>Risk Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the identification and management of risk fully embedded in the management processes of the organisation at all levels? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Risk Management Strategy agreed and used to produce Strategic Risk Register around delivery of Corporate Plan objectives, which in turn informs the allocation of resources and determination of operational actions. Quarterly consideration of strategic risk register by management team. Operational Plan developed and monitored on a risk management basis and evaluation of operational plan expenditure proposals supported by structured evaluation of associated risk. Minor improvement here to better link operational activities to specific strategic risk mitigation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is carefully considered risk-taking and innovation promoted within the organisation? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk taking fully enshrined as one of key organisational values, and promoted through management team leadership.
<p>Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are budgets and other resources regularly allocated and monitored to ensure that they are delivering agreed objectives? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three year corporate plan financial forecasts, lead into annual budget setting processes. Monthly monitoring of performance against budget, linked with detailed quarterly review of project delivery against key milestones and consideration of associated budget amendments. Regular consideration and scrutiny by the Finance Committee.
<p>Staff</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are employee's objectives and personal development plans aligned with corporate objectives and performance appraisal? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraisal process fully embedded, which takes annual operational plan, which itself is derived from Corporate Plan, and establishes targets for each employee. Twice yearly appraisal against targets, and consideration of linked development requirements. Due to be further enhanced through introduction of competency framework.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the contribution of staff to ensuring continuous improvement supported, managed and reviewed? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linked to core organisational values and managed through appraisal processes.
<p>Assets</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the organisation assess the appropriateness of its asset base to its strategic objectives? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of ongoing strategic and operational budgeting and review processes.
<p>How does the organisation ensure that its tangible and intangible assets are maintained and recorded to appropriate standards?</p>	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset register in place and maintained. Subject to internal and external audit review.
<p>Procurement</p>	

<p>What strategies are in place to procure goods and services, ensuring they are competitive, adopt best practice, and are linked to the corporate objectives?</p>	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement requirements embedded into Financial Regulations and accompanying guidance. • Review by Scottish Executive for procurement above Financial Memorandum threshold. • Application overseen by Corporate Services staff to enhance consistency of application.
<p>To what extent does the process ensure efficient contract management and consider sustainable development, equalities and health and safety?</p>	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardised processes, including templates for contract specification, terms and conditions and award letters, seek to ensure all necessary elements of efficient contract management, sustainable development, equalities and health and safety are covered.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What processes are in place for the effective use of e-procurement? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trialling use of web based procurement advertising.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation assess the efficiency and effectiveness of its procurement processes and current contracts to ensure it gets optimum value from its investments? 	<p>Under Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some coverage by internal audit and also review by Corporate Services staff. • Use of contracts procured by other partner organisations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation ensure that it places the 	<p>Not yet covered</p>

<p>minimum burden on suppliers during procurement and throughout the life of a contract?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current focus very much on ensuring contracts meet Authority's requirements rather than on minimising burden on suppliers.
<p>Financial Stewardship</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation ensure appropriate compliance with the Scottish Public Finance Manual and other relevant guidance such as the HM Treasury Financial Reporting Manual? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment of qualified professional staff who oversee activity in these areas and advise colleagues accordingly. • Financial Regulations in place to support SPFM requirements. • Well developed, adequately resourced, independent internal audit service, supported by external audit review. • Development and maintenance of good ongoing relationships with sponsor team.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What frameworks are in place to provide reasonable assurance that there are effective internal control systems in operation? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All points above, plus annual internal audit report; statement of internal control included in audit accounts and approved by Audit Committee; establishment of Audit Committee itself.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What audit procedures have been established within the organisation and is there an Audit Committee with 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <p>Fully Embedded</p>

<p>appropriate authority and membership?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit Committee established with appropriate authority and membership • Contract let to independent internal auditors who report direct to Audit Committee.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is financial and general performance reported to Executive and Non-executive leadership of the organisation, to bodies that provide funding and to other stakeholders? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular management accounts reports to budget holders, and overview reports to management team and Board’s Finance Committee. • Production of annual report and accounts. • Finance Committee reports are public documents. Other reports to funding bodies and stakeholders produced as required.
<p>Shared Services</p>	
<p>How does the organisation assess the costs, weaknesses, opportunities and risks associated with possible candidates for service sharing?</p>	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As with any other project, shared services candidates and activities assessed as part of a business case assessment, including consideration of opportunities and risks to delivery, using PRINCE2 methodology.

RESPONSIVENESS AND CONSULTATION	
High Level Questions to consider	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation communicate effectively with public sector partners, sponsor departments (if appropriate), and the relevant business, the voluntary sector and other relevant stakeholders? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of communication channels adopted: direct representation on Board, delivery teams and advisory forums; formal reports and publications; press releases. • Targeted communications with specific groups and ongoing liaison with officers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you ensure that the organisation is responsive to the needs of your stakeholders, citizens and customers? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of consultation and two-way communication undertaken, while seeking to integrate stakeholders fully within key delivery frameworks. • Processes are open, with information available to all and participation by stakeholders welcomed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are the organisation's plans, priorities and actions informed by an understanding of stakeholder, citizen and customer needs? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of consultation and two-way communication undertaken. • Stakeholder analysis under development to help inform who and how we contact to determine needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation review the effectiveness of its approach to consultation 	<p>Not yet covered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This area of activity still to be developed formally. Review of effectiveness of each consultation

to ensure that this delivers the required outcomes at a reasonable cost?	activity undertaken within that specific project. Need for wider consideration of effectiveness in order to build on best practice and possibly improve overall effectiveness.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways are the organisation's consultation arrangements open, fair, accessible and inclusive? 	<p>Good Practice Open processes, supported by information provision across a variety of media to ensure various stakeholder needs are met and Authority processes are accessible by all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wide ranging skills and knowledge within staff base, who seek to use wide variety of appropriate stakeholder networks. 					
Overall Summary Conclusion						
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Not yet covered	Under Development	In Place/Improvements Required	Good Practice	Fully Embedded		
Detailed Questions to consider	Current Position and Evidence Identified					
<p>Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways does the organisation recognise the diversity of its stakeholders? 	<p>Good Practice Recognition starts at Board level, with large, 25 member Board established in part to recognise wide diversity of stakeholder interest in the Park, including 5 directly elected by local members. Open processes, supported by information provision across a variety of media to ensure various stakeholder needs are met and Authority processes are accessible by all. Wide ranging skills and knowledge within staff base, who seek to use wide variety of appropriate stakeholder networks.</p>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are stakeholder perceptions and feedback used to continually improve upon performance? 	<p style="background-color: yellow;">In Place/Improvements Required</p> <p>Feedback received directly from stakeholders, through Board members and staff attending meetings, through formal consultation responses and ad hoc feedback, and use of web or mail contacts.</p> <p>Developing National Park Plan delivery Groups and advisory Forums, which will form another two-way communication channel. Well developed processes for considering feedback as part of consultation processes, but may need to consider implementing/adapting processes for considering other forms of</p>					

	feedback and building outcomes of this into continuous improvement programmes.
Consultation	
<p>How has the organisation developed and implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an effective and accessible complaints system 	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>Complaints system in place and embedded within staff handbook, following consultation with Staff Consultative Forum.</p> <p>Complaints system accessible through website, or from direct request to the Authority.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a methodical approach to identify who to consult and how to undertake the consultation most effectively 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <p>Consultation processes are typically open rather than targeted, although responses from specific stakeholder groups may be particularly and proactively targeted.</p> <p>Building on National Standards for Consultation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a systematic approach for co-ordinating consultation exercises and sharing information (as appropriate within legislative constraints and guided by organisational operating context) within the organisation and with other bodies. 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <p>Building on National Standards for Consultation.</p> <p>Developing a central point of expertise to advise on consultation exercises.</p> <p>Working on coordinating consultation exercises externally with partners and internally, to ensure consultations are as joined-up, understandable and efficient as possible.</p>

<p>How does the organisation link the results from consultations into the planning cycle in order to inform the designing and improving of services and policies?</p>	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <p>Still relatively early in the organisation’s development to consider this. Consultation processes very effective in taking on comment received and considering feedback in finalising or amending proposals.</p> <p>Work potentially required to link outcomes of consultation processes more widely into any issues of continuous service or policy improvement.</p>
<p>How does the organisation ensure that there is a systematic approach to consultation?</p>	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <p>Developing a central point of expertise to advise on consultation exercises.</p> <p>Consultation processes designed fully in advance of implementation, building on organisational experience of a number of wide ranging consultations that have been successfully undertaken to date.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation ensure all interested parties have an opportunity (and are encouraged) to consult with the organisation? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <p>Consultation processes are typically open rather than targeted, although responses from specific stakeholder groups may be particularly and proactively targeted. Variety of media used to inform stakeholders of consultation and encourage their participation in the process.</p> <p>Building on National Standards for Consultation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation communicate to stakeholders and partners e.g. actions from consultation exercises? 	<p>Good Practice Building on National Standards for Consultation.</p> <p>Variety of media used to feedback to stakeholders following consultation. Written responses to specific submissions, copies of amended and/or final documents following consultation. Board paper summarising consultation processes and comments received are also public documents and communicated to consultees for information.</p>
<p>What processes are in place to review the effectiveness of the</p>	<p>Not yet covered No formal organisational review of consultation processes in place as yet. Results of individual processes reported, but without specific consideration of critical evaluation of effectiveness of</p>

organisation's approach to consultation?	overall approach. Developing a central point of expertise to advise on consultation exercises.
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USE OF REVIEW AND OPTIONS APPRAISAL

High Level Questions to consider

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation consider the effectiveness of policy development or the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well developed quarterly review of Operational Plan delivery and organisational effectiveness/health through balanced scorecard monitoring. Supported by regular papers on specific areas of activity. • At least annual consideration of overall direction of service delivery and activity through consideration of forward operational plan and review of overall progress against established strategic objectives / milestones.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When considering opportunities for improvement, how does your organisation demonstrate a fair and open approach in evaluating alternative forms of service delivery? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Corporate Plan, and prioritisation and options within that, considered at Board level with advice from management team. Full scale evaluation and option appraisal at least every 3 years. • All aspects of draft annual operational plan subject to scrutiny and consideration of potential delivery options by management team. • All planned activities with a budgeted financial consequence subject to a formal option appraisal element as part of the expenditure justification process prior to financial commitment. • Testing of options for service delivery as elements of service renewal or replacement arise, or as specific changes in wider context of service delivery arise.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation prioritise areas for Review and Options Appraisal? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing of options for service delivery as elements of service renewal or replacement arise, or as specific changes in wider context of service delivery arise.

Overall Summary Conclusion						
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Not yet covered	Under Development	In Place/Improvements Required	Good Practice	Fully Embedded		
Detailed Questions to consider	Current Position and Evidence Identified					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the organisation identify, prioritise and schedule services or strategic themes to be subject to review and option appraisal? 	<p>Good Practice Strategic Corporate Plan, and prioritisation and options within that, considered at Board level with advice from management team. Full scale evaluation and option appraisal at least every 3 years. All aspects of draft annual operational plan subject to scrutiny and consideration of potential delivery options by management team.</p> <p>All planned activities with a budgeted financial consequence subject to a formal option appraisal element as part of the expenditure justification process prior to financial commitment.</p> <p>Testing of options for service delivery as elements of service renewal or replacement arise, or as specific changes in wider context of service delivery arise.</p>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is review and option appraisal resourced within the organisation? 	<p style="background-color: yellow;">In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically led and coordinated by Corporate Services with consideration by full management team and consultation with staff, if appropriate, through SCF. Also resourced through internal audit contract. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What corporate guidance has been provided on the scope and methodology of review and option appraisal? 	<p style="background-color: yellow;">In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For specific operational activities, option appraisal is embedded as part of expenditure justification process. This is set out in Financial Regulations and supported by relevant guidance notes and Corporate Services staff. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the organisation ensure that the views, priorities and concerns of 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For specific activities, many project activities will be undertaken jointly with partners and their 					

<p>customers, partners and stakeholders are embedded in the review and option appraisal process?</p>	<p>views will consequently be sought and built into our own option evaluation processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider consultation and liaison undertaken on an ongoing basis with key partners, e.g. SNH and local authorities, to ensure synergy as far as possible between organisational plans.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the organisation compare its service levels, performance standards and costs with those of other potential providers or alternative methods of enabling service? 	<p>Under Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established balanced scorecard framework to look at overall organisational health and effectiveness. Beginning to look at standard suite of PIs produced by Audit bodies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the organisation's programme of review and option appraisal monitored to ensure adequacy of progress and robustness of approach? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of specific activity proposals by senior management, Board members and Scottish Executive at certain financial thresholds. Developing this area as part of ongoing internal audit review. Well developed Operational Plan monitoring processes consider in detail whether objectives are being met and outcomes realised on basis of options chosen.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the organisation manage implementation of the outcomes of review and option appraisal, and assess the extent to which projected benefits are realised? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well developed Operational Plan monitoring processes consider in detail whether objectives are being met and outcomes realised on basis of options chosen. Developing assessment of whether projected benefits are realised as part of rolling programme of internal audit activity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the organisation quantify the improvement 	<p>Not yet covered</p>

realised following review and option appraisal, whether from service developments, efficiency gains or cashable savings?

- Current status of organisational objectives and operation does not lend itself well to many quantitative measures. Assessment and monitoring is primarily qualitative, but with well established qualitative links between Corporate, Operational, project and staff objectives.

A CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT						
High Level Questions to consider						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the organisation established a commitment to the principles of sustainable development and how has this been communicated throughout the organisation? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior level organisational commitment to sustainable development throughout organisation and recognised explicitly in overarching themes of Corporate and National Park Plans. All key strategy decisions are evaluated against consideration of impact on sustainability and sustainable development. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways is your organisation contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of activities focused on achieving sustainable development set out explicitly in annual Operational Plans. 					
Overall Summary Conclusion						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, at what stage is the organisation in developing arrangements for this characteristic of Best Value? 						
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Detailed Questions to Consider:	Current Position and Evidence Identified					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation show its commitment at both Executive and Non-Executive leadership and senior management level, to 	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>Leadership in establishment of sustainable development policy and strategy at Board, Staffing and Recruitment Committee and Management Team levels. Sustainable development policy given specific approval, and prominent leadership, at full Board.</p> <p>Audit Committee specifically asked to develop a strategic oversight role in implementation and</p>					

<p>contribute to the achievement of sustainable development?</p>	<p>achievement of climate change outcomes. An Organisational Greening Group leads on improving the sustainability of the Authority's own, internal operations.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways is your contribution to the achievement of sustainable development reflected in your organisation's objectives, and in all strategies and plans at corporate and operational levels? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>Sustainable development set out in statutory objectives of the Authority, which therefore gives overarching direction to other strategy and policy.</p> <p>Equality of opportunity set out explicitly in overarching Corporate and National Park Plan themes and considered as a standard item in evaluation of all key strategic decisions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you ensure that these plans, priorities and actions are informed by consultation with stakeholders and the communities affected by the organisation; and by joint working with the organisation's key partners nationally and locally? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>Need for collective effort in achieving sustainable development has been recognised and built into terms of reference for collective, multi-partner delivery teams. Also, collective work being undertaken with a wide range of partners on climate change.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways are your performance indicators, measure and targets designed to demonstrate and report on the organisation's contribution to sustainable 	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>As set out elsewhere, well developed Operational Plan monitoring processes show progress made in achieving agreed targets, which themselves feed back into more strategic Corporate Plans.</p> <p>Under Development</p>

<p>development?</p>	<p>Work is in progress in developing performance measures and a monitoring framework for the National Park Plan delivery</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do your review activities take account of sustainability issues and how do you assess the impact of policy proposals on the pursuit of sustainable development? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>Delivering Sustainability is set out explicitly in overarching Corporate and National Park Plan themes and considered as a standard item in evaluation of all key strategic decisions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you take sustainable development considerations into account in your procurement strategy? 	<p>Not yet covered</p> <p>Procurement strategies and policies do not yet include any requirement to consider sustainability in tendering for goods or services. Some conflicting advice on this received from Scottish Executive, with the matter to be pursued further in due course.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways do you ensure there is a systematic approach to the management of resources which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>As mentioned previously, consideration of sustainability is a key element in all activity and expenditure planning.</p> <p>Organisation-wide budget processes also consider priority of resource allocations and factor in the achievement of sustainable development along with all other key strategic priorities, with the Board taking final decision on such key strategic resource allocation policy.</p>

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ARRANGEMENTS

High Level Questions to consider

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation meet its equal opportunities requirements? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior level organisational commitment to equality throughout organisation and recognised in overarching themes of Corporate and National Park Plans. All policies and procedures set out in the staff handbook are designed to ensure they meet equal opportunities requirements. • Statutory equality codes published or in development, which include forward action plans. • Recruitment policies adapted to ensure equality of opportunity, and equality monitoring data collected and reviewed. • Organisation-wide training put in place to support these policies, procedures and codes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation recognise the diverse needs of groups in the community and reflect these in policy development and service delivery, reviews and designs? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with and facilitated by representative groups throughout the area. Equality codes developed in consultation and on the basis of feedback with these groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation demonstrate a commitment to mainstream equalities? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior level organisational commitment to equality throughout organisation and recognised in overarching themes of Corporate and National Park Plans. Leadership commitment to equality at highest levels in organisation, supported by policy, procedure and training.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What measures are in place to meet the current and future equal opportunities requirements and eliminate discrimination? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As in first question. 					
<p>Overall Summary Conclusion</p>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, at what stage do you think your organisation is in ensuring arrangements are in place to secure Best Value? 						
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<p>Detailed Questions to consider</p>	<p>Current Position and Evidence Identified</p>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the organisation show its commitment at both Executive and Non-Executive leadership and senior management levels, to contribute to the achievement of equal opportunities? 	<p>Good Practice Leadership in establishment of equal opportunity policy and strategy at Board, Staffing and Recruitment Committee and Management Team levels. Statutory Equality Codes given approval, and prominent leadership, at full Board.</p>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways is your contribution to the achievement of equal opportunities reflected in your organisation's objectives and in all strategies and plans at corporate and operational 	<p>Good Practice Equality of opportunity set out explicitly in overarching Corporate and National Park Plan themes and considered as a standard item in evaluation of all key strategic decisions.</p>					

levels?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you ensure that you consult and engage these plans, priorities and actions with equality groups and the communities affected by them nationally and locally? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>Making use of established equality groups within the Cairngorms area to consult with and assist in the development of equality plans and policies. Consultation and input of views of these groups are thus embedded in the process.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you measure and report your performance in contributing to the achievement of equal opportunities? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>Data collected and recorded on recruitment and other staffing activities, and reported regularly to Committee.</p> <p>Equality strategies include forward action plans, and progress against these may be monitored and reported.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you conduct impact Assessments on any new policies, services and functions? 	<p>Not yet covered</p> <p>Specific impact assessments are not yet undertaken on new policies or functions. However, as indicated above, these are explicitly proofed against equality requirements when first developed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you collect and use data on equality issues? 	<p>In Place/Improvements Required</p> <p>Current data collection mainly focuses on staff and recruitment activities, and reports on these are made to the Staffing and Recruitment Committee of the Board.</p> <p>Equality strategies include forward action plans, which may include future action to widen data collection and reporting.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you review activities that take account of equality issues? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>Equality of opportunity set out explicitly in overarching Corporate and National Park Plan themes and</p>

	considered as a standard item in evaluation of all key strategic decisions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you ensure that all members of staff are informed of the organisation's commitment to and objectives for equal opportunities? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>Communication on this to all staff through a number of media: staff meetings, staff consultative forum, written updates, in addition to explicit inclusion in corporate and National Park Plans.</p> <p>Supported by organisation-wide training, which all members of staff are required to attend, and again which reinforced the organisation's commitment to these principles.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you ensure that equal opportunities are included in your employment, process, staff policy and training? 	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>Centralised oversight of this by Human Resources / Corporate Services staff to ensure full inclusion of equal opportunities in these areas in a consistent basis.</p> <p>Update training/staff development for HR and CS staff to ensure implementation is on basis of fully updated principles.</p>

JOINT WORKING						
High Level Questions to consider						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways does the organisation demonstrate a commitment to working with partnership organisations to ensure a joined up approach? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully explicit through the Authority’s approach to development and implementation of the National Park Plan (NPP). 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What measures and appraisal processes does the organisation have in place to assess the effectiveness of partnership working? 	<p>Good Practice Built into project appraisal as a part of the Expenditure Justification process for operational plan activities. Developed as part of a business case assessment for any specific instances of partnership working in developing shared corporate or support services.</p> <p>Under Development Being developed as part of the NPP delivery process for Park Plan delivery.</p>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does partnership or joint working improve service to the organisation's communities and stakeholders? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The need for collective delivery of service recognised both in establishing the Authority as an enabling authority, and flowing from that in the underpinning ethos of the Authority’s work with partners in the Park area. 					
Overall Summary Conclusion						
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Detailed Questions to consider	Current Position and Evidence Identified
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation work in partnership to ensure that the following areas are addressed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agreeing clear shared objectives? ○ Agreeing respective roles and commitments? ○ Checking that all relevant interests are represented in the partnership? ○ Integrated management of resources where appropriate? ○ Effective monitoring of collective performance? ○ Joint problem solving? ○ Reviewing to check that partnership is still the most effective 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Park Plan (NPP) represents the successful culmination of an intensive period of effective joint working with a wide range of partners. • The next stage of delivery of NPP actions will be undertaken through joint delivery teams. The process of establishing these delivery teams and getting them operational has commenced in March / April 2007 and the final evaluation of the extent to which they will display these Best Value characteristics can only, therefore, be finally determined some time hence. However, they have been designed to deliver in a way that will deliver all these characteristics.

<p>approach?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have management ensured the barriers to joint working have been identified and mitigated? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <p>As an enabling authority, the consideration of ensuring barriers to joint working have been identified and mitigated is core to our success and we have spent considerable time on this, including: staff away days; variety of workshops; seeking specific feedback; open and inclusive approach to activities and embedding this approach within our organisational values.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation appraise joint working approaches with regards to the projected benefits? 	<p>Fully Embedded</p> <p>As above, joint working is a standard approach for the Authority. It is built into project and activity evaluations to ensure any risks are highlighted at the outset.</p> <p>In terms of central and corporate services, the projected benefit of joint working is developed as part of the project initiation documentation and business plan development for any joint activity.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation work across different departments to see if collaborative purchasing can achieve multiple (including social) benefits? 	<p>Not applicable: small scale organisation</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation ensure it participates effectively in Community Planning Partnerships? 	<p>To be completed – Andrew Harper</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does the organisation, through the shared services agenda, seek to promote and explore opportunities for efficiency savings and service improvements?	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>The Authority is working closely with partners in the identification of potential shared services projects, both in terms of bilateral agreements with individual partners and in full participation with other Rural NDPBs in the On the Ground Initiative and development of the Single Environment and Rural Services (SEARs).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does the organisation formalise working arrangements with partnerships agreeing objectives, performance and protocols?	<p>Good Practice</p> <p>The Authority takes a fit for purpose approach, with memoranda of understanding, concordats or service agreements established in some instances. Where necessary, we will consider more legalistic, formal agreements.</p>