Annual governance report





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Key messages

This report summarises the findings from the 2011/12 audit which is substantially complete. It includes the messages arising from my audit of your financial statements and the results of the work I have undertaken to assess your arrangements to secure value for money in your use of resources.

Financial statements

As at 28 August 2012 I expect to issue an unqualified audit opinion. As in previous years I have included in my audit report an emphasis of matter paragraph in relation to the adequacy of the contingent liability disclosures made in note 35, in respect of prior years payments in relation to conservation management agreements, to the accounting statements. This does not affect my opinion on the statements.

- There were no errors identified that need to be brought to your attention.
- The financial statements and supporting working papers were provided within the agreed timescale and were of a high standard.

Value for money (VFM)

I expect to conclude that there are no matters arising from my VFM work that I need to report. My VFM work consisted of a review of your Annual Governance Statement.

Before I give my opinion and conclusion

My report includes only matters of governance interest that have come to my attention in performing my audit. I have not designed my audit to identify all matters that might be relevant to you.

Independence

I can confirm that I have complied with the Auditing Practices Board's ethical standards for auditors, including ES 1 (revised) - Integrity, Objectivity and Independence.

I am not aware of any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the Audit Commission, the audit team or me, that I am required by auditing and ethical standards to report to you.

The Audit Commission's Audit Practice has not undertaken any non-audit work for the Authority during 2011/12.

I ask the Authority to:

■ approve the letter of representation (appendix 2), on behalf of the Authority before I issue my opinion and conclusion.

Financial statements

The Authority's financial statements and annual governance statement are important means by which the Authority accounts for its stewardship of public funds. As elected Members you have final responsibility for these statements. It is important that you consider my findings before you adopt the financial statements and the annual governance statement.

Opinion on the financial statements

Subject to satisfactory clearance of outstanding matters, I plan to issue an audit report including an unqualified opinion on the financial statements. As in previous years my report includes an emphasis of matter paragraph as follows: "In forming my opinion on the financial statements, which is not modified, I have considered the adequacy of the contingent liability disclosures made in note 35 to the financial statements concerning the legality of payments the Authority has made in prior periods totalling £1,236,008 for conservation management agreements, which fall within the European Union's definition of 'State Aid' in relation to farming support. The ultimate outcome of the matter cannot presently be determined, and no provision for any liability that may result from a failure to obtain retrospective authorisation has been made in the financial statements."

Appendix 1 contains a copy of my draft audit report.

There were no errors identified in the audit that need to be brought to your attention. There were a small number of trivial errors in the financial statements that were amended by the Authority. The Finance team should be commended on the standard of the financial statements and the supporting working papers.

Significant risks and my findings

I reported to you in my 2011/12 Audit Plan the significant risks that I identified relevant to my audit of your financial statements. In Table 1 I report to you my findings against each of these risks.

Table 1: Risks and findings

Risk

The level of savings public bodies need to make is unprecedented. The Authority, like other National Park Authorities, is facing significant financial challenges as a result of reduction in National Park Grant (NPG) and other financial pressures. This could increase the scope for financial misreporting in the financial statements.

Finding

I assessed the control environment of the Authority. In particular I focussed my review on the management controls in place for those areas of the financial statements that are more susceptible to manipulation. This included:

- accounting estimates (asset valuations, depreciation, accruals and provisions);
- change to accounting policies that impact the financial position;
- journals; and
- capital expenditure

I also considered the in-year performance of the Authority against the year-end financial position to identify any unusual or unexpected transactions.

My testing has not identified any significant issues to bring to your attention

Significant weaknesses in internal control

It is the responsibility of the Authority to develop and implement systems of internal financial control and to put in place proper arrangements to monitor their adequacy and effectiveness in practice. My responsibility as your auditor is to consider whether the Authority has put adequate arrangements in place to satisfy itself that the systems of internal financial control are both adequate and effective in practice.

I have tested the controls of the Authority only to the extent necessary for me to complete my audit. I am not expressing an opinion on the overall effectiveness of internal control. I have reviewed the Annual Governance Statement and can confirm that:

- it complies with the requirements of CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework; and
- it is consistent with other information that I am aware of from my audit of the financial statements.

Other matters

I am required to communicate to you significant findings from the audit and other matters that are significant to your oversight of the Authority's financial reporting process including the following.

- Qualitative aspects of your accounting practices
- Matters specifically required by other auditing standards to be communicated to those charged with governance. For example, issues about fraud, compliance with laws and regulations, external confirmations and related party transactions.

Other audit matters of governance interest

I have no matters I wish to report.

Whole of Government Accounts

Alongside my work on the financial statements, I have also reviewed and reported to the National Audit Office on your Whole of Government Accounts return. The extent of my review and the nature of my report were specified by the National Audit Office. I have no matters to report.

Value for money

I am required to consider the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

For 2011/12 the Commission has determined that the scope of my work on value for money at the Authority is limited to:

- reviewing the Annual Governance Statement (AGS);
- reviewing the results of the work of other relevant regulatory bodies or inspectorates, to consider whether there is any impact on my responsibilities; and
- other risk-based work as suitable.

As I reported in my 2011/12 Audit Plan:

- I am not aware of any relevant work of other relevant regulatory bodies or inspectorates; and
- I have not identified any significant risks requiring specific risk-based work.

I have reviewed your AGS and I have no matters that I need to report.

Fees

I reported my planned audit fee in the 2011/12 Audit Plan.

I will complete the audit within the planned fee.

Table 2: Fees

	Planned fee 2011/12 (£)	Expected fee 2011/12 (£)
Audit	19,679	19,679
Non-audit work	Nil	Nil
Total		

The Audit Commission has paid a rebate of £1,574 to reflect attaining internal efficiency savings, reducing the net amount payable to the Audit Commission to £18,105.

Appendix 1 – Draft independent auditor's report

Opinion on the Authority financial statements

I have audited the financial statements of Dartmoor National Park Authority for the year ended 31 March 2012 under the Audit Commission Act 1998. The financial statements comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2011/12.

This report is made solely to the members of Dartmoor National Park Authority in accordance with Part II of the Audit Commission Act 1998 and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 48 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by the Audit Commission in March 2010.

Respective responsibilities of the Chief Finance Officer and auditor

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Chief Finance Officer's Responsibilities, the Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom, and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. My responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require me to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of the audit of the financial statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of: whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Authority's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Chief Finance Officer; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. I read all the financial and non-financial information in the explanatory foreword to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements. If I become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies I consider the implications for my report.

Opinion on financial statements

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of Dartmoor National Park Authority as at 31 March 2012 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2011/12.

Emphasis of matter

In forming my opinion on the financial statements, which is not modified, I have considered the adequacy of the contingent liability disclosures made in note 35 to the financial statements concerning the legality of payments the Authority has made in prior periods totalling £1,236,008 for conservation management agreements, which fall within the European Union's definition of 'State Aid' in relation to farming support. The ultimate outcome of the matter cannot presently be determined, and no provision for any liability that may result from a failure to obtain retrospective authorisation has been made in the financial statements.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, the information given in the explanatory foreword for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which I report by exception

I report to you if:

- in my opinion the annual governance statement does not reflect compliance with 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: a Framework' published by CIPFA/SOLACE in June 2007;
- I issue a report in the public interest under section 8 of the Audit Commission Act 1998;
- I designate under section 11 of the Audit Commission Act 1998 any recommendation as one that requires the Authority to consider it at a public meeting and to decide what action to take in response; or
- I exercise any other special powers of the auditor under the Audit Commission Act 1998.

I have nothing to report in these respects.

Other matters on which I am required to conclude

I am required under Section 5 of the Audit Commission Act 1998 to satisfy myself that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. I am also required by the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice to report any matters that prevent me being satisfied that the audited body has put in place such arrangements.

I have undertaken my audit in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice and, having regard to the guidance issued by the Audit Commission in October 2011, I have considered the results my review of the annual governance statement.

As a result, I have concluded that there are no matters to report.

Certificate

I certify that I have completed the audit of the accounts of Dartmoor National Park Authority in accordance with the requirements of the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the Audit Commission.

Wayne Rickard District Auditor

Audit Commission
3-4 Blenheim Court
Lustleigh Close
Matford Business Park
Exeter
EX2 8PW

September 2012

Appendix 2 – Draft letter of management representation

Dartmoor National Park Authority - Audit for the year ended 31 March 2012

I confirm to the best of my knowledge and belief, having made appropriate enquiries of other officers of Dartmoor National Park Authority, the following representations given to you in connection with your audit of the Authority's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2012.

Compliance with the statutory authorities

I have fulfilled my responsibility under the relevant statutory authorities for preparing the financial statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom which give a true and fair view of the financial position and financial performance of the Authority, for the completeness of the information provided to you, and for making accurate representations to you.

Uncorrected misstatements

The effects of uncorrected financial statements misstatements summarised in the attached schedule are not material to the financial statements, either individually or in aggregate.

Supporting records

I have made available all relevant information and access to persons within the Authority for the purpose of your audit. I have properly reflected and recorded in the financial statements all the transactions undertaken by the Authority.

Irregularities

I acknowledge my responsibility for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud or error.

I also confirm that I have disclosed:

my knowledge of fraud, or suspected fraud, involving either management, employees who have significant roles in internal control or others where fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements:

- my knowledge of any allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the entity's financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others; and
- the results of our assessment of the risk the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.

Law, regulations, contractual arrangements and codes of practice

I have disclosed to you all known instances of non-compliance, or suspected non-compliance with laws, regulations and codes of practice, whose effects should be considered when preparing financial statements.

Transactions and events have been carried out in accordance with law, regulation or other authority. The Authority has complied with all aspects of contractual arrangements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance.

All known actual or possible litigation and claims, whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements, have been disclosed to the auditor and accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework.

Accounting estimates including fair values

I confirm the reasonableness of the significant assumptions used in making the accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value.

Contingent liabilities

There are no other contingent liabilities, other than those that have been properly recorded and disclosed in the financial statements. In particular:

- there is no significant pending or threatened litigation, other than those already disclosed in the financial statements;
- there are no material commitments or contractual issues, other than those already disclosed in the financial statements; and
- no financial guarantees have been given to third parties.

Related party transactions

I confirm that I have disclosed the identity of the Authority's related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which I am aware. I have appropriately accounted for and disclosed such relationships and transactions in accordance with the requirements of the Code.

Subsequent events

I have adjusted for or disclosed in the financial statements all relevant events subsequent to the date of the financial statements.

Signed on behalf of Dartmoor National Park Authority

I confirm that this letter has been discussed and agreed by the Authority on 7 September 2012

Signed

Name

Position

Date

Appendix 3 – Glossary

Annual Audit Letter

Letter issued by the auditor to the Authority after the completion of the audit that summarises the audit work carried out in the period and significant issues arising from auditors' work.

Annual Governance Report

The auditor's report on matters arising from the audit of the financial statements presented to those charged with governance before the auditor issues their opinion and conclusion.

Annual Governance Statement

The annual report on the Authority's systems of internal control that supports the achievement of the Authority's policies aims and objectives.

Audit of the accounts

The audit of the accounts of an audited body comprises all work carried out by an auditor under the Code to meet their statutory responsibilities under the Audit Commission Act 1998.

Audited body

A body to which the Audit Commission is responsible for appointing the external auditor.

Auditing Practices Board (APB)

The body responsible in the UK for issuing auditing standards, ethical standards and associated guidance to auditors. Its objectives are to establish high standards of auditing that meet the developing needs of users of financial information and to ensure public confidence in the auditing process.

Auditing standards

Pronouncements of the APB that contain basic principles and essential procedures with which auditors must comply, except where otherwise stated in the auditing standard concerned.

Auditor(s)

Auditors appointed by the Audit Commission.

Code (the)

The Code of Audit Practice for local government bodies issued by the Audit Commission and approved by Parliament.

Commission (the)

The Audit Commission for Local Authorities and the National Health Service in England.

Ethical Standards

Pronouncements of the APB that contain basic principles relating to independence, integrity and objectivity that apply to the conduct of audits and with which auditors must comply, except where otherwise stated in the standard concerned.

Financial statements

The annual statement of accounts that the Authority is required to prepare, which report the financial performance and financial position of the Authority in accordance with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

Group accounts

Consolidated financial statements of an Authority and its subsidiaries, associates and jointly controlled entities.

Internal control

The whole system of controls, financial and otherwise, that the Authority establishes to provide reasonable assurance of effective and efficient operations, internal financial control and compliance with laws and regulations.

Materiality

The APB defines this concept as 'an expression of the relative significance or importance of a particular matter in the context of the financial statements as a whole. A matter is material if its omission would reasonably influence the decisions of an addressee of the auditor's report; likewise a misstatement is material if it would have a similar influence. Materiality may also be considered in the context of any individual primary statement

within the financial statements or of individual items included in them. Materiality is not capable of general mathematical definition, as it has both qualitative and quantitative aspects'.

The term 'materiality' applies only to the financial statements. Auditors appointed by the Commission have responsibilities and duties under statute, as well as their responsibility to give an opinion on the financial statements, which do not necessarily affect their opinion on the financial statements.

Significance

The concept of 'significance' applies to these wider responsibilities and auditors adopt a level of significance that may differ from the materiality level applied to their audit of the financial statements. Significance has both qualitative and quantitative aspects.

Those charged with governance

Those entrusted with the supervision, control and direction of the Authority. This term includes the members of the Authority and its Audit Committee.

Whole of Government Accounts

A project leading to a set of consolidated accounts for the entire UK public sector on commercial accounting principles. The Authority must submit a consolidation pack to the department for Communities and Local Government which is based on, but separate from, its financial statements.

If you require a copy of this document in an alternative format or in a language other than English, please call: **0844 798 7070**

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The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors, members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
- any third party.

