YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park

Veritau Customer Service Audits Proposal

Introduction & background

1. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (the Authority) has undertaken and successfully maintained the Customer Service Excellence Standard since 2010. The CSE Standard has five criteria with 57 supporting standards against which the Authority must demonstrate compliance over a three-year rolling cycle. External assessors conduct an annual 2-day visit to the Authority, with Authority staff providing evidence to demonstrate its commitment to providing high-quality customer service.

2. The Authority is intending to introduce an internal system for monitoring its customer service standards. The Director of Corporate Services has asked Veritau to prepare a proposal outlining possible audit engagements which would help provide assurances over the internal system and the Authority's customer service standards, as an alternative to continuing to participate in the CSE Standard.

3. This proposal outlines several audits related to customer service that could be conducted. They do not replicate the entirety of the CSE Standard but aim to provide assurance in key areas related to customer service. A summary of the proposed audits is in Table 1.

4. The proposal also notes audits that Veritau has completed, or could carry out, as part of the internal audit annual work programme that indirectly relate to elements of the CSE Standard. These are not customer service audits as their focus is on other risks (e.g. financial, legislative compliance), but they may provide assurance over some areas that are included in the CSE Standard. A summary of these audits is in Table 2.

5. Audits usually range from 3 – 5 days' work, depending on the nature and scope of the work, and the availability and support of officers. Audits in the tables below would be scoped and agreed accordingly. Additional work would be charged at Veritau's standard day rate (£395 + VAT for 2025/26), with the number of days agreed with the Authority. The extent to which any work could be undertaken as part of the annual work programme would be one of the areas to discuss in further detail with the Director of Corporate Services.

Proposed audits

Table 1: Proposed customer service audits

Audit	Scope	Links to CSE Standard
Customer complaints, compliments and feedback	This audit would review: ▲ Policies, procedures, and training for handling complaints in an appropriate and timely fashion, as well as lessons learnt from complaints. ▲ How the Authority informs the public of how to provide feedback, whether positive or negative. ▲ The Authority's arrangements for obtaining feedback from the public and using this to drive service improvements (e.g. the residents' and visitors' surveys).	This audit covers customer service standards, timeliness of service, and learning from feedback. It links to the following parts of the Standard: 1. Customer Insight: how the Authority seeks to understand its customers and improve services. 4. Delivery: how the Authority monitors and meets standards and performance targets. 5. Timeliness and Quality of Service: how the Authority sets and monitors standards for customer service.
Performance management & data quality	This audit would review: ▲ The completeness and accuracy of datasets for customer service KPIs and the process by which KPIs are compiled to confirm their suitability. ▲ How the Authority benchmarks its performance against other similar organisations and uses the results to improve services. ▲ Actions taken to address any areas of underperformance against targets or standards.	This audit covers customer service standards, linking to the following parts of the Standard: 2. The Culture of the Organisation: how the Authority puts customers at the centre of how it operates. 4. Delivery: how the Authority monitors and meets standards and performance targets. 5. Timeliness and Quality of Service: how the Authority sets and monitors standards for customer service.

Audit	Scope	Links to CSE Standard
Use of social media / communications	This audit would review: ▲ Policies, procedures and strategy in relation to communications and use of social media to provide assurance objectives are being met. ▲ Staff training on appropriate use of social media and procedures for handling inappropriate content. ▲ Controls to ensure access to social media accounts was restricted to appropriately authorised and trained officers.	This audit covers how the Authority communicates with the public in an appropriate and effective manner, linking to the following parts of the Standard: 1. Customer Insight: how the Authority seeks to understand its customers and improve services. 3. Information and Access: how the Authority makes information available to customers and ensures it is complete, accurate and up to date.

Table 2: Audits covering other aspects of the CSE Standard

Audit	Scope	Links to CSE Standard
Human resources	Audits of HR and payroll are undertaken periodically, most recently in 2022/23. These have focused on payroll, starters, leavers, and sickness absence processes. An audit in this area could also review: ▲ The suitability of and completion rates for the staff appraisal process. ▲ Adherence to recruitment policies. ▲ Staff training and development plans.	2. The Culture of the Organisation: This criterion has standards related to staff development and professionalism that could be covered through the audit.
ICT audits	As a high-risk area, Veritau regularly provides assurance over ICT-related matters for the Authority. Audits in recent years have covered cyber security, ICT asset management, systems development and maintenance, and ICT Security (including disaster recovery plans, access control and staff training).	2. The Culture of the Organisation: This criterion has standards related to protecting customers' privacy and storing their data securely. Audits in this area review the suitability of ICT security arrangements, including protecting and storing customer data.

Audit	Scope	Links to CSE Standard
Information governance	Information governance arrangements were most recently audited in 2024/25. These audits involve reviewing policies and procedures related to information governance, staff training and guidance, handling of FOIs/EIRs, monitoring performance and reporting.	2. The Culture of the Organisation: This criterion has standards related to protecting customers' privacy and storing their data securely. Our audits provide assurance on the suitability of the Authority's information governance arrangements.
Planning	Planning audits are undertaken periodically. In 2021/22, we reviewed the procurement and implementation of the Authority's new planning system. In 2018/19, we reviewed the planning process, including: assessing and granting applications; how the Authority consults interested parties and takes their views into consideration; the timeliness of decision-making; and the process for taking decisions against officer recommendations.	As a planning authority, the Authority deals with planning applications in the National Park. The planning application process, standards of service and information made available to applicants and interested parties are extensively referenced throughout the CSE Standard.
Transparency	The Authority is required to publish certain information under the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (LGTC) to inform local people about issues important to them, for example how money is spent, assets are used, and decisions are made by the Authority. This audit would review the Authority's compliance with the Local Code.	3. Information and Access: The Authority should make information available about its services and activities. Complying with the LGTC makes certain information about the Authority available to businesses and interested parties, as well as demonstrating its commitment to transparency in its activities.