

# NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

30 September 2020

Present: Councillor P Harries (Chair)

Councillor P Baker, Councillor K Doolin, Councillor M Evans, Dr M Havard, Dr R Heath-Davies, Mrs S Hoss, Mrs J James, Councillor M James, Mr G Jones, Councillor P Kidney, Councillor PJ Morgan, Councillor R Owens, Dr R Plummer, Councillor A Wilcox, Councillor M Williams and Councillor S Yelland

[Councillor Mrs D Clements arrived during consideration of the Minutes of the Standards Committee (Minute 6(iii) refers).]

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am –11.50am; 12.00pm – 1.05pm)

## 1. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

## 2. Disclosures of Interest

Councillor M Evans disclosed an interest in the Supplementary Planning Guidance element of the Local Development Plan (Minute 8 refers) and he played no part in the discussion or voting in respect of Resolutions 8(e) to 8(h).

## 3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 29 July 2020 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

In respect of Minute 5 – Chair’s Announcements, the Chair had noted that he had attended a number of meetings on behalf of National Parks Wales, of which he was also Chair. Members wished their congratulations to him on that appointment to be recorded. Also in respect of Minute 14, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust, the final paragraph congratulated Trustees on their success, however it was requested that the work of officers be also reflected and it was therefore suggested that the word “Trustees”, be replaced with “the Trust”.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 29 July 2020 be confirmed and authenticated subject to the above amendments.

## 4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.



## **5. Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reported that he had not attended any functions since the last meeting of the Authority due to the lockdown restrictions. However he reported that he had attended two meetings of the WLGA Rural Forum on behalf of National Parks Wales, as well as a meeting of that body to prepare for future Ministerial meetings. National Parks Wales had met with the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government to discuss lockdown lessons and the future including green recovery and designated landscapes. A further meeting would be held with the Deputy Minister later in the week to discuss various items including sustainable landscapes, National Development Framework and Access Forum.

The Chair, together with Councillor R Owens and Mrs S Hoss, had also met with the Youth Committee and with the Deputy Chair he had met Audit Wales. He would be attending the AGM of National Parks Partnership that afternoon with the Chief Executive.

He concluded by thanking both Members and staff for their continued resilience and support in the current difficult circumstances and hoped that that they, their families and friends remained safe.

**NOTED.**

## **6. Reports of meetings of various of the Authority's Committees**

The following reports of meetings of a number of the Authority's Committees were presented to Members for consideration/information:

- (i) Development Management Committee held on 15 July 2020;
- (ii) Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee held on 8 July 2020;
- (iii) Standards Committee held on 22 July 2020;
- (iv) Personnel Committee held on 22 July 2020; and
- (v) Members Support and Development Committee held on 29 July 2020.

In respect of the minutes of the Personnel Committee, Members asked what the response rate for the Staff Survey had been and officers replied that it had been over 80%. The results had been reported to the Authority's Leadership Team and further meetings with Team Leaders, Staff Representatives Forum and wider staff focus groups were planned to provide some qualitative data, by exploring further the perceptions which lay behind the figures.

Members were also concerned about the effects of COVID-19 on staff workloads and stress levels, particularly in relation to the planning department. Officers replied that they were aware of the pressures within the planning team where action had been taken to address the backlog in applications. The Chief Executive added that there were a number of



ways for staff to raise issues of concern regarding workload and other matters such as discussions with line managers or the HR Manager, meetings of the Staff Forum and discussions with Members as part of the Employee Forum.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the above mentioned Committees be adopted/received.

## 7. **ISA260 Report to those Charged with Governance**

The Chair welcomed Deryck Evans from Audit Wales to the meeting, although unfortunately he was able to join via audio only. He explained that the ISA260 Report summarised the main findings from the audit of the Authority's 2019-20 accounts.

Unsurprisingly, COVID-19 had impacted the audit, however Mr Evans wished to thank the Finance Manager and his team for their work under difficult circumstances, and for the assistance they had provided to the auditors. He noted that it had been necessary to devise new ways of working to obtain the necessary evidence for the audit, and it was hoped that lessons learned would make the process more efficient next year.

Although there had been some minor issues that had required correction, the Auditor intended to issue an unqualified audit opinion on this year's accounts. However attention was drawn in paragraph 17 to a technical amendment in that there was a material uncertainty clause disclosed in a pension fund manager's year-end valuation report for the UK property fund they managed on behalf of the Dyfed Pension Fund.

It was noted at the meeting that the figures provided in paragraph 17 of the ISA260 Report were incorrect, and the sentence should have read "The total value of this fund as at 31 March 2020 is £296 +£53m [*£349m*] million and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park's share of this fund amounts to *£3.25 million +£584k [£3.83m]* (1.1%)." [Amendments in italics.] As a result of this, changes had also been made to note 33 of the statement of accounts. However the Auditor stressed that he was happy that the accounts gave a true and fair view of the Authority's finances.

The Finance Manager (Chief Financial Officer) then answered some questions he had received with regard to the 2019-20 Accounts, which were appended to the report. He noted that the figures shown in red did not need to be highlighted and should have been printed in black. Addressing an apparent inconsistency between the figures on page 55 of the accounts that merchandise sales and admissions at the Authority's sites had flatlined or were lower than in 2017/18 while the Annual Report on meeting Well-being Objectives stated at page 152 that increased income from merchandise sales, car park income and other charges had



compensated for the reduction in core funding. However this latter report was making comparisons with the 2013/14 figures. With regard to the SDF projects listed at paragraph 31, these were projects for which payments had been made in the 19/20 financial year, not the year in which the projects had been approved.

Members wished to congratulate the Finance Manager and his team for an excellent set of accounts and an unqualified report from Audit Wales and the Chief Executive added his thanks to them and to Audit Wales for what had been achieved during a difficult few months.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The ISA260 report from Audit Wales be accepted subject to the amendment to paragraph 17; and
- b) The Statement of Accounts 2019/20 be approved subject to the consequential amendment to note 33.

#### **8. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan 2 – Adoption & Supplementary Planning Guidance**

Members were reminded that following approval for submission by the Authority in November 2018, Local Development Plan (LDP) 2 (including proposed Focussed Changes) had been the subject of an Examination into its soundness during 2019 before a Welsh Government appointed Planning Inspector Mrs Nicola Gulley.

The Inspector's binding Report had been received by the Authority on 13 May 2020 and a non-technical summary of this was appended to the report before the Committee, together with a draft copy of the adopted Plan (text and maps) with the Inspector's recommended changes included, and the draft Adoption Statement. These documents, together with the final Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Appraisal), Habitats Regulations Assessment and Equalities Impact assessment had been published on the Authority's website and those who had participated in Plan preparation had been notified.

It was reported that Authority was normally required to adopt the Plan within eight weeks of receipt of the Inspector's Report, however due to the exceptional circumstances resulting from COVID-19 this had not been possible. However the approach with regard to the timing of adoption had been agreed with Welsh Government officials.

The Plan became operative on the date it was adopted, and the report explained that all planning applications not determined by the date of adoption would be determined under the policies of LDP 2, although it



was noted that since receipt of the Inspector's Report consideration of the policies of LDP 2 had been a significant material planning consideration in the determination of applications.

The report went on to explain that new Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) was currently being drafted, and existing SPG updated to make it relevant to LDP 2. Members were therefore asked to formally roll over some SPG from LDP 1 as an interim measure for Development Management purposes while new SPG was being prepared (Affordable Housing; Land Instability – Coal Works; Landscape Character; Loss of Hotels; Planning Obligations; Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites; Safeguarding Mineral Zones; The Cumulative Impact of Wind Turbines; and Seascape Character); approve some draft SPG for consultation (Parking Standards; Place Plan – Community Land Trust and Affordable Housing; Sustainable Design and Development; Archaeology; and Biodiversity, the latter two being produced jointly with Pembrokeshire County Council) and to approve some draft SPG for consultation but to also approve it to be used as an interim measure for Development Management purposes (Caravan, Camping and Chalet Development and Renewable Energy with the exception of the advice for the Marloes and Mynydd Preseli Landscape Character Areas in relation to wind turbine development). Further reports on the SPG consultations would be made to the Authority in due course.

Members sought reassurance regarding the use of SPG for Development Management purposes while it was still the subject of consultation. The Head of Park Direction explained that as Policy 41 (Caravan, Camping and Chalet Development) of LDP2 was based on the evidence found in the SPG, the SPG could be considered a material planning consideration in proposals going forward.

Members wished to thank officers and to commend them for the amount of work that had been undertaken. They were also pleased to note the joint work with Pembrokeshire County Council and believed that members of the public would find this approach helpful.

With regard to the Landscape Character SPG, one Member asked about the impact of Ash Dieback on the landscape and officers replied that they would liaise with Natural Resources Wales regarding its implications.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan 2 (appended at Appendix B), as amended in accordance with the Inspector's binding Report be adopted.
- b) The operative date of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan 2 be approved as the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020. All



applications received from that date would be determined using the policies of the Local Development Plan 2.

- c) Publication of the Local Development Plan 2 together with the Adoption Statement (Appendix C) and final Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment, the Habitats Regulations Assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment be authorised in accord with the Regulations and guidance.
- d) The Authority's Head of Park Direction be authorised to ensure compliance with the relevant regulations and guidance for Plan adoption.
- e) The carrying over of the supplementary planning guidance relating to Affordable Housing; Land Instability – Coal Works; Landscape Character; Loss of Hotels; Planning Obligations; Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites; Safeguarding Mineral Zones; The Cumulative Impact of Wind Turbines; and Seascape Character be approved as interim supplementary planning guidance under the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan 2 to be used for development management purposes.
- f) Supplementary Planning Guidance relating to Archaeology; Biodiversity; Parking Standards; Place Plan – Community Land Trust and Affordable Housing; and Sustainable Design and Development be approved for consultation.
- g) The use of the Caravan, Camping and Chalet Development draft supplementary planning guidance be approved as an interim measure for development management purposes while published for consultation.
- h) The use of the Renewable Energy draft supplementary planning guidance be approved as an interim measure for development management purposes with the exception of advice for the Marloes and Mynydd Preseli Landscape Character Areas in relation to wind turbine development. The Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Guidance is also published for consultation

[Having disclosed an interest, Councillor M Evans did not vote on resolutions e) to h) above]

## **9. Annual Report on Meeting Well-Being Objectives (Improvement Plan Part 2) 2019/20**

Members were reminded that under the Local Government (Wales) Measure, the Authority was required to publish an Improvement Plan Part 2 by 31 October. The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 also placed a duty on the Authority to set out its Well-being Objectives and to



demonstrate how these contributed to the Welsh Government's seven Well-being Goals. Under the legislation, each year bodies had to publish an annual report showing the progress they had made in meeting their objectives. They also had to demonstrate how they had applied the 5 ways of working under the sustainable development principles of Long Term, Prevention, Integration, Collaboration and Involvement.

The document before the Authority was both its Improvement Plan Part 2 and its annual report on progress made against its Well-being Objectives. In order to ensure equality and biodiversity considerations were mainstreamed across the Authority it also acted as its annual equality report and formed one element of the Authority's reporting on how it complied with the S6 duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The report outlined progress against the work programme proposed in the Authority's Corporate and Resources plan for 2019-20, however since March 2020 the COVID-19 Pandemic and regulations had impacted delivery of some areas of work.

The officer noted at the meeting that there was an error on page 43, where the second paragraph stated that the youth residential had been held in February, rather than March 2020.

Members thanked the officer for the huge amount of work that had been undertaken to deliver the report and asked questions regarding various aspects of it. It was suggested that for future years a summary highlighting the key achievements would be a worthwhile addition.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Report on Meeting Well-being Objectives (Improvement Plan Part 2) 2019/20 be approved.

*[The Meeting was adjourned between 11.50am and 12.00pm]*

## **10. Human Resources Policy Development, Approval and Implementation**

It was reported that the Authority's Human Resources (HR) department had committed to undertake a 'root and branches' review of all HR policies, of which there were more than 80, to streamline them and make them more easily understood by staff and managers.

Due to the scale of the task at hand, a policy document had been produced which aimed to ensure a consistent and evidence based process for the development, approval and management of all HR policies and procedures. It formalised the consultation and approval process for the formal adoption of Authority HR policies, balancing the need for rigorous challenge with timely implementation.



One Member suggested that, while not disagreeing with the approval process set out, there were instances where Personnel Committee could usefully be informed of Human Resources policy matters and it was suggested that an update, which could be verbal in nature, could be provided at each meeting.

Another Member questioned whether the proposed approach was seeking permanent or temporary delegation of these matters, and if the former, it was suggested that a review of the policy be undertaken in the next two years. It was also suggested that the Personnel Committee could usefully have a discussion regarding its Terms of Reference which would need to be amended if the policy was approved.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The approach to Human Resources Policy Development, Approval and Implementation as set out in the draft policy be approved and the necessary changes made to the Terms of Reference of the Personnel Committee;
- b) The Policy be reviewed within two years of the date of this meeting; and
- c) The Personnel Committee agenda to include a standing item to provide an update regarding Policy Development.

#### **11. Member Development Training Plan**

Members were reminded that during 2020, all Members had been asked to undertake a personal development review, and to date, ten had returned their Personal Support Plans. A Training Plan had been developed from these Support Plans and this was appended to the report, together with a summary of the training needs identified by the ten Members which had informed its preparation.

The Training plan had been discussed at the meeting of the Member Support and Development Committee held on 29 July 2020 when it was adopted subject to the inclusion of two additional subject areas. These had been included in the Training Plan before Members.

The Chair of the Member Support and Development Committee thanked the Administration and Democratic Services Manager for developing the Training Plan and encouraged those eight Members of the Authority who had yet to undertake their Personal Development Reviews to do so, or to at least to complete the section regarding their training needs. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the Plan was sufficiently flexible to incorporate any additional training needs that were identified during the year.





It was **RESOLVED** that the Member Support and Development Training Plan be adopted.

**12. To Appoint a Member to the Board of Visit Pembrokeshire**

It was reported that in February 2020, the Authority had agreed to support the creation of a new Destination Management Organisation for Pembrokeshire.

Since that time, the Shadow Board had been working to set up the new organisation and it was hoped that the new body, to be called Visit Pembrokeshire, would be launched in early November. The Authority therefore needed to appoint a Member to sit as a Director on the Board. The appointed Member would become a Director of Visit Pembrokeshire and would therefore need to meet the requirements and responsibilities of a Company Director.

The Chief Executive added that as the Articles of Association had yet to be finalised, the term of office was currently unclear, however he noted that it was expected that any Member appointed would cease to be a Board Member at the end of their Term of Office on the National Park Authority. He clarified that even though Members appointed by Pembrokeshire County Council would be involved in Local Government elections in May 2022, they remained eligible to put their names forward to sit on the Board.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Mrs D Clements be appointed to the Board of Visit Pembrokeshire for the duration set out in the Visit Pembrokeshire Articles of Association or their term of office on the National Park Authority, whichever was shorter.

The Minutes of this meeting were confirmed at the meeting of the National Park Authority held on 2 December 2020 without amendment
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