

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

3 June 2020

Present: Councillor P Harries (Chair)

Councillor P Baker, Councillor Mrs D Clements, 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

(Virtual Meeting: 10.30am – 1.15pm)

1. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 6 May 2020 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

In respect of Minute 10 – Endorsement of Contract Standing Order 16 in regard insurance cover commencing 1st April 2020, it was noted that the word “of” was missing from the first line of the resolution.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 6 May 2020 be confirmed and authenticated subject to the above amendment.

4. Matters arising

(a) Independent Members of the Standards Committee (Minute 11)

It was requested that, once received, a copy of the biographies of the two members be circulated to Members of the Authority.

NOTED.

(b) Personal Development Reviews (Minute 13)

The Administration and Democratic Services Manager advised that she had received seven completed Personal Development Reviews (PDR) to date. She added that the Member Support and Development Committee would shortly be considering a training plan for Members, so any further personal support plans to help inform that document would be welcomed.

The Chair added that he had found the process to be both painless and enjoyable and offered to facilitate a meeting for any Member who wished to complete their PDR.



NOTED.

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 the Authority had taken over the secretariat for National Parks Wales (NPW) on 1 April 2020, and he had had the honour of chairing a meeting of that body on 7 May 2020. As an action arising from the meeting, he had written to the Deputy Minister seeking a meeting to discuss management of the National Park Authorities' financial resources to ensure delivery of services in the future. He had also attended Livestream training alongside other Members and staff of the Authority.

He concluded by thanking both Members and staff for their continued support in the current difficult circumstances and hoped that that 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) Chief Executive Performance Review Panel 22 April 2020
- (ii) Member Support and Development Committee 6 May 2020.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the above mentioned Panel and Committee be adopted/received.

7. Corporate and Resources Plan

It was reported that under the Local Government Measure, the National Park Authority was required to publish its Improvement Plan as soon as practical for the new financial year. The Well-being of Future Generations legislation required public bodies to publish a plan showing how it would deliver towards the well-being goals and how it had applied the Sustainable Development principle in its work. Therefore, in order to reduce duplication this Corporate and Resources Plan was intended to fulfil the requirements of both pieces of legislation by developing the Authority's well-being objectives which could also be considered the improvement objectives.

The Authority's original Corporate and Resources Plan 2020/21 had been due to go the National Park Authority meeting on the 1st April 2020 for approval; this meeting was postponed due to COVID-19 related measures. Since that time, the document had been amended to reflect



new regulations and measures to protect the Authority's staff, communities and the public it served.

The Performance and Compliance Coordinator went on to explain that due to a need for the Authority to be able to respond effectively to changing circumstances while also responding to longer term outcomes, the Corporate and Resources Plan 2020/21 had been split into two. The first section was based on short and mid-term priorities focused on the Authority's COVID-19 response and recovery planning. This section took a phased approach that would assist the Authority, as external factors and regulations changed, to be responsive and effective in its approach, while ensuring the safety of staff and service users were maintained during 2020/21. It would assist the Authority to ensure its actions helped the recovery process for communities and businesses in the Park and surrounding area that had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Long Term priorities and actions originally planned for 2020/21, contained in the original corporate and resources plan that remained relevant had been kept in the second section of the plan. Some activities within work streams in the section on 'Working Towards Long Term Objectives' might not be delivered this year but would form the basis of the longer term delivery of the Well-being Objectives and impacts within the National Park Management Plan. Activities under work streams would be subject to further review during the year to assess whether they remained relevant or needed to be updated to align with recovery plans.

Members wished to thank the officer for the huge amount of work needed to revise the Plan, which had been undertaken in a very short space of time. They were concerned that it was sufficiently realistic and the Chief Executive responded that there were still many unknown factors, however the Plan would be revised as circumstances changed.

There was some discussion regarding the Authority's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the Chief Executive acknowledged the difficulties that arose as a result of the constantly changing circumstances but noted that the Authority was responding to these as appropriate, working closely with other agencies.

Some amendments were suggested, such as inclusion of the Authority's response to the Natural Resources Wales Area Statements and that a clearer distinction be made between the 'ticks' which indicated the Authority's contribution to the well-being goals set out in Appendix 2 of the Plan. The officer agreed to incorporate both amendments in future reports. One Member asked whether consideration could be given to including targets with a higher and lower limit, rather than revising targets. She also felt that some areas where the Plan showed the Authority to be



weaker were marine, economic development and tourism and culture and Welsh Language.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Corporate Plan 2020/21 be approved.

8. Responding to the Climate Change Emergency

Members were reminded that following a discussion at the Authority's Employee Forum in June 2019, a report outlining how the Authority was responding to climate change, via carbon reduction and sequestration, adaption and mitigation was presented to the October 2019 meeting of the Authority when it was resolved that an Action Plan should be prepared.

Following a Member workshop and consultations with staff, Members and National Park Management Plan Reference Group members, the document "Responding to the Climate Change Emergency (2020 – 2030) – our actions to deliver the National Park Management Plan 2020-2024" had been produced and was appended to the report for Members' approval.

It was reported that Actions within document would be mainstreamed within the Authority's Corporate and Resources Plan and performance framework to ensure that the Plan was monitored and actions were considered as central to the work of the Authority.

Thanking the officer for her report, Members noted that it would be helpful to incorporate the change in behaviour that had resulted from the Covid-19 lockdown – particularly the reduction in travel of both staff and Members through holding virtual meetings. The Performance and Compliance Coordinator agreed that changing behaviour was central to delivering the document, and it was anticipated that another section could be added to the report at its next annual review. Another Member added that it was important to capture the learning now, rather than looking back in six months' time, and that this applied to Members as well as Authority staff.

Another Member noted that while there had been many positive outcomes as a result of the lockdown, he did not believe that the current situation could be portrayed as ideal because he felt it created a barrier between the public and the Authority. However he felt that the Authority had provided the best service possible in the circumstances

Returning to the document, it was suggested that the dates be removed from the title of the document as these potentially caused confusion. One Member asked whether Welsh Government had confirmed the methodology for the calculation of carbon, as set out in the 'Monitoring' section of the document. The officer replied that she didn't believe it had



been published, noting that many programmes had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. However in the interim, the Authority would continue to measure its performance against that of previous years. Members suggested that National Parks Wales could usefully press Welsh Government on this matter.

It was **RESOLVED** that the document Responding to the Climate Change Emergency 2020-2030 be approved subject to removing the dates from the title.

9. Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

The Finance Manager reminded Members that the Authority was required to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and they were invited to contribute to and shape the contents of the draft Statement appended to his report.

The AGS set out the Authority's governance framework in terms of its decision making structures, as well as the actions taken in respect of the significant governance issues identified in the previous year and thus the report also set out actions for the coming year. The Statement also contained a review of effectiveness of the Authority's governance framework, including the system of internal control, based on the principles of the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Code of Corporate Governance.

The Statement had been reviewed by the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee at its meeting in February and the comments made had been incorporated within the Statement before the Authority.

Members made a number of comments on the document, highlighting the need to include the Members Support and Development Committee within the Governance section of the report, to reflect the ongoing engagement with young people through the creation of a Youth Committee, a report on which would be considered later in the meeting; and also that recommendations from the Internal Auditors had resulted in changes to the format of the Risk Register and to practices in areas such as Health and Safety.

The Finance Manager agreed to take these points on board and the revised Statement would be presented to a future meeting of the Authority for agreement.

NOTED.



10. Grant Approvals in Accordance with Section 76 of the Financial Standards

It was reported that authorisation was required in accordance with Section 76 of the Financial Standards (2020) which stated that where there was a payment of 'Total value Grant and Sponsorships under any one agreement over £10,000', approval must be obtained from the National Park Authority.

In the 2020/21 financial year one payment currently fell into this category, a payment of £15,000 to Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum (PCF) to help integrate and manage coastal activity. An outline of the payments made, and the work undertaken, was set out in the report.

Members were happy to support the excellent work undertaken by PCF, however one Member wanted to know more about the Forum and asked that details of its Board and Annual Report be circulated. The Chief Executive agreed to do this, adding that the Authority had supported PCF over a number of years and he suggested that they make a presentation to one of the Authority's Review Committees on the work undertaken as a result of the funding.

It was **RESOLVED** that the payments to Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum be approved.

11. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Youth Committee

Members were reminded that in November 2018, following the attendance of Members and Youth Rangers at the Europarc Conference, a presentation had been made to the Authority on the Youth Manifesto, the document which had been prepared by the Youth delegates from all over Europe and presented to the Conference. This highlighted the concerns of young people and suggested what could be done to address these, including a call for young people to be more involved in making decisions that affect them.

It was reported that the Authority's Discovery Team had worked collaboratively with Pembrokeshire County Council's Children and Young People's Rights Office to develop and deliver the Youth Committee activity to date. This had included a residential weekend on 13 – 15 March 2020 at Pentre Ifan, together with subsequent online meetings.

Two members of the Committee, Carys and Matt, were present at the meeting and provided an overview of the weekend. They went on to ask the Authority to approve the Terms of Reference, nominate a Member representative on the Youth Committee and to consider sustaining support and funding for the Youth Committee in future. They also asked whether Members could identify any areas of work to which the Committee could contribute.



Members were very supportive of the creation of a Youth Committee, but had a number of comments on the Terms of Reference, believing that they needed to be clear whether the Youth Committee was a sub-committee of the Authority, set out how the meeting would be chaired, who would supply the secretariat, how the costs for hire of venue would be met etc and also to include something to facilitate the choice of language for young people when attending residentials, workshops, etc. However Members did not want to prescribe any such changes, and it was suggested that the Youth Committee consider including the above points and that the agreement of the Terms of Reference be delegated to the Chair and then circulated to Members of the Authority.

With regard to Member representation on the Committee, the following Members expressed a willingness to participate:
Councillor P Harries, Councillor P Baker, Councillor M James, Councillor R Owens, Mrs S Hoss and Dr M Havard.

The final request related to sustained support and funding. The Chief Executive advised that the Authority's Committees were not usually allocated a budget, although resources and support were provided to enable the Committee to function. Requests for funding could be made to the Authority as needed. Some Members, however, wished to provide the Youth Committee with a small budget, of c£500, and this was proposed and seconded. An amendment was then proposed that the Youth Committee put forward costed proposals for funding and this was also seconded. The amendment was, therefore, put to the vote and was subsequently carried.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) Agreement of the PCNPA Youth Committee Terms of Reference be delegated to the Chair, and circulated to Members for information
- 2) The following Members be authorised to attend the Youth Committee:
Councillor P Harries, Councillor P Baker, Councillor M James,
Councillor R Owens, Mrs S Hoss and Dr M Havard.
- 3) The Youth Committee be requested to put forward costed proposals for funding.

12. Proposed Temporary Amendment to Standing Order 5: Appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair

Members were reminded that the recent passing of the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 provided the framework within which the Authority could convene virtual meetings of the Authority and its Committees using video and/or telephone conferencing software.



While the Regulations allowed all local authorities to defer the convening of their Annual General Meetings (AGM) for the duration of the Regulations, the Authority had held its AGM immediately prior to this meeting as the outgoing Chair and Deputy Chair had been nominated for re-election unopposed and both were duly re-elected in line with the Authority's Standing Orders.

Standing Order 5 set out the voting procedure for electing Chairs and Deputy Chairs, which included the requirement to vote by secret ballot when more than one nomination had been received. When all Members were present in the same room, ballot papers would be distributed, collected and counted. However under the current circumstances this procedure would not be possible and it was recommended that an additional Standing Order be added to allow for votes to be cast by email, telephone or text, sent to the Administration and Democratic Services Manager, as set out in the report.

Members agreed that there were good reasons for holding a secret ballot in these circumstances and the recommendation to temporarily amend Standing Order 5 in relation to the procedure for the election of Chairs and Deputy Chairs to the National Park Authority and its Committees was proposed and seconded. However some Members felt that such a vote could as easily be made by show of hands and an amendment to this effect was proposed and seconded, but the vote was lost. The amendment therefore fell, and a vote on the substantive motion took place and this was carried.

It was **RESOLVED** that while the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 remained in force, Standing Order 5 in relation to the procedure for the election of Chairs and Deputy Chairs to the National Park Authority and its Committees be temporarily amended as set out in the report.

[The Chair informed the meeting that unfortunately he had to attend a funeral and he therefore tendered his apologies and left the meeting. The Deputy Chair took the Chair.]

13. Vegetation Control on the Coast Path and Inland Rights of Way Network during Lockdown

It was reported that on 26 March, the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 came into effect imposing a duty on various bodies including the National Park Authority to close certain public footpaths and land in order to protect against the risks to public health arising from coronavirus. In response, the Coast Path had been closed and the regular maintenance work that the Authority would ordinarily be undertaking at this time of year had been limited.



The report provided Members with an update on the gradual process of key staff returning to work specifically to keep on top of vegetation growth. This work was vital in order to maintain the local network of paths that were available for local residents to undertake exercise 'on their doorstep' as well as preparing the Coast Path for visitors once the current Covid-19 lockdown restrictions had been lifted. However the overarching priority remained the protection of PCNPA staff and the wider public and comprehensive risk assessments had been undertaken.

Thanking the Director for his report, Members applauded the work that had been undertaken and were pleased to read that the job management system introduced last year had proved to be so helpful and a worthwhile investment. One Member questioned why the Coast Path had been closed when, for example, the Gower path remained open. The Chief Executive replied that this was a complex issue, however the number of people that could be expected on the Pembrokeshire Coast Path was greater than on the Gower path. He felt that the decision, which had been taken in consultation with Welsh Government, had been the right one to protect both users and local communities.

