

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

CHIEF EXECUTIVE PERFORMANCE REVIEW PANEL

2pm, 23 September 2020

Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Cllr Paul Harries (Chair)

Cllr Di Clements (Deputy Chair)

Dr Rachel Heath-Davies (Deputy Chair, Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee) (Note taker)

Mr Tegryn Jones (Chief Executive)

Notes of meeting:

1. Apologies

All members were present and there were no apologies.

2. Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest by Members.

3. Exemption of the public

It was agreed that the public would be excluded from the next item due to the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

4. CEO review

The Members reviewed the Chief Executive's progress against the ten objectives that were agreed at the last review meeting. The Chief Executive had presented his report in advance of the meeting for Members to consider and the Chair proposed that he took the committee through the ten objectives in turn. The main points raised are noted below:

1. Review and manage the Authority's resources, taking account of the impact of COVID19 and to include a process to explore options with the involvement of Members with a view to setting a balanced budget in 2021- 22

The Chief Executive told Members that he felt the Authority was in a stronger financial position at this point in time, compared to the previous period. Where the Authority had been potentially facing a projected £1m income reduction, it was now closer to £300,000. The lifting of some lock

down restrictions during the summer had meant that centres had been able to open and to generate income during that time.

The Chief Executive also reported that he had secured £1m additional capital funding during the past months for additional EV charging points.

During the first phase of the pandemic, he felt that the profile of the park had increased, with many more people visiting the area and also the media and Ministers attention being higher than previously. The committee agreed that it is important to grasp this as an opportunity.

2. Raise the scale of ambition with staff by exploring new sources of funding and new ways of working

The Chief executive reported that this had been challenging in the current climate. He used the example of the additional £1m funding to demonstrate that the scale of ambition had increased. He had felt that they had nothing to lose by applying, and was pleased that the capital funding had been won.

3. Conduct a corporate review of where our future priorities should be involving Members, staff and stakeholders that will take account of how the National Park Authority is able to meet the challenges for the National Park and local communities of responding to COVID-19, Brexit and other factors

No progress had been made on this objective due to the difficulty of holding face to face meetings. Members encouraged the Chief Executive to progress this objective by arranging on-line meetings with Members as well as using other forms of technology including survey monkey. The benefits of arranging smaller group discussions were conveyed, as well as the possibility of discussing with Members one-to-one. A survey to all Members was agreed to be a useful starting point to collect information about high level principles to form a corporate set of priorities.

Recommendations from audit reports were raised, being as auditors (both external and internal) have raised the proliferation of activities and as a result the Authority needs to streamline them – focusing on priorities. The Chief Executive reflected on the opportunities available to the Authority, being as we are not restrained to statutory remit to the same extent as local authorities.

4. Develop and implement initiatives on land and within the marine to enable the Authority to assist with tackling climate change and the loss of biodiversity

The Chief Executive reported that the Authority has adopted its climate change plan during this reporting period as well as refocused the SDF grant programme to align with our plan.

He said that the Green Recovery was ill defined and that tackling climate change would need discussion with the wider membership of the Authority. He raised the option in his report to explore extending our enforcement powers as he felt that this may be the right time in terms of approaching this with Welsh Government if Members supported doing so. There was a subsequent discussion on the balance of using education, encouragement and enforcement and Members agreed that all of these were important to protect and enhance the park. However, it was agreed that is disparity between the knowledge already existing among local/ regular users of the park and one-off/ new visitors that were less familiar with the Marine code, countryside code and knowledge of the area. Use of jet skies and the impact on seals was one example. For regular users, the Access Forum was useful as well as our education programme. Controlling access was agreed to be a cultural leap, but is a tool used in other parks.

More broadly, the Chief Executive talked about the economic challenges afoot exacerbated by covid 19: noting in particular the Sustainable Farming policy and challenges faced by the third sector e.g. Wildlife Trust.

5. Ensure Destination Management structure is progressed

In addition to the outline in the Chief Executive's report, he updated the committee that the CEO was about to be appointed. Longer term, it was inevitable that the question of Coast to Coast would be raised, but at present, he had told staff members to continue as usual.

6. Support the health and well-being of staff through supporting the HR Manager to undertake a review and consultation on HR policies and practices, including committing to the Welsh Government Corporate Health Standard

The Chief Executive had circulated the results of the staff survey before the meeting. He said that generally the response rate had been 80% and staff had generally responded well. Members felt that some of the responses were of a concern, highlighting those about lack of working across departments, communication and feeling listened to. While some answers may appear contradictory in some instances, there were some

common themes on communication, involvement, and trust in executive, as well as 50% seeking alternative employment that remained a concern. Members enquired about next steps and the Chief Executive said that he would arrange focus groups with staff to explore the themes and underlying issues. It was also suggested that there could be a role for the Personnel Committee to receive reports on follow up work.

7. Develop and implement proposals to introduce efficient ways of working that reduces costs and the carbon footprint of the Authority

The Chief Executive had reflected that new, and more efficient ways of working had accelerated during the covid19 pandemic. He explained that a new whiteboard would be installed in the Board room and we may have a hybrid way of working where some Members attended in person and others virtually.

8. Support work towards the WLGA Advanced Member Charter

Ten out of 18 Members had completed the performance review and Members asked if this was sufficient to apply for the award. Having the opportunity made available to Members was sufficient to meet the criterion.

The Members asked the Chief Executive whether there were areas he had identified for Members in terms of training and concern over adhering to the LDP policy once adopted was one. There was a discussion on ways to develop Members and it was agreed that a seminar on the LDP would be arranged.

9. Work with Partners to positively influence policies relating to designated landscapes leading to and after the 2021 National Assembly elections

The Chief Executive outlined his initial thoughts on engaging with Assembly Members and politicians in the lead up to the elections and explained the collaboration with other parks to engage with the main political parties.

Members offered suggestions on engaging with AMs through webinars/ talks on subjects – as these were proving useful tools during lock down for other organisations.

Another Member raised disappointment with the report on the authority's parcel of land and the Chief Executive responded with some of the opportunities that could arise.

10. Involve the Chair in agreeing appropriate agenda items and acting as a conduit for Members to raise issues.

Both the Chair and Chief Executive agreed that this objective was being progressed and the Chair would like to see more participation from Members feeding in what is to be discussed. One Member suggested a two-layer meeting agenda where decision papers come first followed by a more narrative/ discursive style paper. Other information papers could be below the line. Notice of Motion was a formal mechanism to ensure an item is put on an agenda but Members felt that the spirit of this objective pointed to a more positive and proactive approach.