

# NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

2 December 2020

Present: Councillor P Harries (Chair)

Councillor Mrs D Clements, Dr M Havard, Mrs S Hoss, Mrs J James, Councillor M James, Mr G Jones, Councillor P Kidney, Councillor PJ Morgan, Dr R Plummer, Councillor M Williams and Councillor S Yelland

[Councillor R Owens joined the meeting following consideration of Matters Arising from the minutes (Minute 4); Councillor M Evans joined the meeting during consideration of the Notice of Motion (Minute 7); Councillor K Doolin joined the meeting during consideration of the Extension to the Scheme of Delegation (Minutes 8) as he had problems with his internet connection.]

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am –12.00pm; 12.10pm – 1.10pm)

## 1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Baker BEM, Dr R Heath-Davies and Councillor A Wilcox.

## 2. Disclosures of Interest

Dr R Plummer disclosed a personal but non-prejudicial interest in respect of report 46/20 (Purchase of land as part of the Sustainable Landscape Sustainable Places Funding for National Park Carbon Sequestration and Supporting Biodiversity).

## 3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 30 September 2020 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 30 September 2020 be confirmed and authenticated.

## 4. Matters arising

### Member Development Training Plan

The Chair of the Member Support and Development Committee asked the Administration and Democratic Services Manager whether any further Personal Development Reviews (PDR) had been completed, and encouraged any Member who had not undertaken one to arrange for this to take place. The officer replied that one additional PDR had been received and she agreed to send another gentle reminder to the Members from whom reviews were outstanding.

**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 had attended two meetings of the WLGA Rural Forum on behalf of National Parks Wales (NPW), had Chaired a meeting of NPW, and alongside the Chairs of Snowdonia and Brecon Beacons NPAs, had met with the Minister for Housing and Local Government, Julie James.

He had also attended a number of online events including a talk on the Eagle Reintroduction Wales project, the Authority's Archaeology Day and several talks as part of Wales Biodiversity Week. He congratulated the officers of the Authority who had taken part in the two latter events. Finally he noted that he hoped to attend a seminar on preparations for implementing the Socio-economic duty which was due to take place the following day.

He concluded by thanking both Members and staff for their continued support in the current difficult circumstances and hoped that that they remained safe and had a chance to meet their families over the Christmas period.

The Chief Executive then announced that the Authority's site at Oriel y Parc would be closing from Friday in line with the recent Welsh Government guidance. As Members were aware, the sites at Carew and Castell Henllys had already been closed. Publicity to inform members of the public would be sent later in the day.

### **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 Committees held on 2 September and 5 October 2020;
- (ii) Youth Committees held on 29 September and 13 October 2020
- (iii) Operational Review Committee held on 23 September 2020;
- (iv) Chief Executive Performance Review Panel held on 23 September 2020;
- (v) Members Support and Development Committee held on 21 October 2020;
- (vi) Sustainable Development Fund Committee held on 4 November 2020;  
and
- (vii) Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee held on 11 November 2020.



In response to a question from Members regarding the minutes of the Chief Executive Performance Review Panel, the Chief Executive advised that the new Chief Executive of Visit Pembrokeshire was Emma Thornton. Councillor Mrs D Clements who sat on the board of that organisation on behalf of the Authority noted that it had held its first meeting and there was a lot of work for it to do.

It was noted that the minutes of the Sustainable Development Fund Committee referred to Coppice College, rather than Coppicewood College. An invitation had been received from that organisation for Members of the Authority to visit the site to see the work that had been funded and all Members would be invited to this event when it could be arranged.

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

**7. Notice of Motion from Councillor P Kidney:  
That the Authority considers a mentor service for staff of the Authority, to discuss any problems or anxieties, in light of extra pressure being put on them due to the current pandemic**

The Chair explained that although the Authority had historically not received many Notices of Motion (NoM), a strict procedure for dealing with them was set out in the Authority's Standing Orders. These stated in paragraph 8.5 a) that if the subject matter came within the province of any Committee, the NoM should upon being moved and seconded, stand referred without discussion to such a Committee, with no verbal amendments permitted.

In response to his question, Councillor P Kidney was advised that the NoM would be referred to the Personnel Committee, and he moved the notice, although he hoped it would be considered by that Committee in a timely manner. This was seconded, however it was questioned why the matter was not being dealt with by the Authority that day as had been the case with a previous NoM. The Monitoring Officer clarified that in the case of the previous NoM it was not obvious which Committee the matter would be referred to, and therefore it had been dealt with by the Authority.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Notice of Motion "That the Authority considers a mentor service for staff of the Authority, to discuss any problems or anxieties, in light of extra pressure being put on them due to the current pandemic" be referred to the Personnel Committee for consideration.



## 8. To Extend the Temporary Changes in Light of the Impact of Covid 19 to the Authority's Scheme of Delegation

Members were reminded that at the meeting of the Authority on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020, it was resolved that temporary amendments be made to the Authority's scheme of delegation in respect of planning matters to allow:

- i) Delegation to the Chief Executive/Director of Planning and Park Direction for applications submitted by the Authority or by a Member of the Authority or an employee of the Authority;
- ii) With agreement from the Chair and Vice Chair of the Development Management Committee, delegation to the Chief Executive/Director of Planning and Park Direction for applications with a recommendation contrary to the view of the city/town/community council;
- iii) With agreement from the Chair and Vice Chair of the Development Management Committee, delegation to the Chief Executive/Director of Planning and Park Direction for major applications which had not received any objections from third parties.

A report to further extend the delegations had been agreed at the Authority meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and it was noted that the extended delegation was intended to ensure manageable numbers of applications on Development Management Committee agendas.

The Director of Planning and Park Direction advised Members that she had been overly optimistic in her estimates of when physical meetings would resume, and she now proposed to extend the temporary amendments to the scheme of delegation until 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021. She advised that to date 17 applications had been determined under the extended scheme.

Members felt that the amended scheme was working well, but asked whether an update could be provided to future Development Management Committees. The Chair of the Committee reassured Members that both he and the Deputy Chair took account of Members' comments and assessed each application to determine whether or not it should be delegated. The Director confirmed that without the extended delegation, there would be a delay in determining applications which would add to the existing backlog of applications.

It was **RESOLVED** that the scheme of delegation with regard to planning matters be temporarily extended until 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021 as set out in the report.



## 9. Variation to Financial Standards for the Procurement of a Development Management Consultant

It was reported that the Development Management Team were currently working at reduced capacity due to long term sickness of one team member. In addition to this, the team was working through a backlog of applications caused by limitations on the service due to Covid-19 and recent IT problems. Since September 2020 the Authority had utilised a planning consultant to assist with the backlog of applications and with the processing of new applications. At the date of the meeting, the expenditure on the consultant totalled £6,100, and this was expected to rise. In accordance with the Authority's financial procedures, expenditure of between £10,000 and £25,000 for this service would require 3 quotes to be obtained.

The requirement to obtain and consider 3 separate quotes would result in a break in the service from the current planning consultant, having an adverse impact on the delivery of the Development Management service and adding to the existing backlog of work and staff pressures. In addition, the consultant, Prospero Planning, had been utilised by the Authority for short-term periods over a number of years, and consequently they were familiar with the Authority's working practices, IT systems and provided a reliable quality service.

Members agreed that the provision of an efficient and effective planning service was important for the Authority and continued use of the existing consultant seemed a sensible way forward. However they asked about the impact of this expenditure on the Authority's budget and sought reassurance that tenders for the service would be sought in future.

The Chief Executive replied that a workshop to discuss budget matters would take place the following week, however the report was presented on the basis that the expenditure could be met. He added that there was a balance in spending money against delivering services, however the planning service was essential and the Authority would continue to respond to circumstances as they arose.

It was **RESOLVED** that a maximum spend on the provision of a Development Management consultant service of £25,000 be agreed.

## 10. Regional Technical Statements for the North Wales and South Wales Regional Aggregate Working Parties (2<sup>nd</sup> Review)

It was reported that Minerals Technical Advice Note 1: Aggregates (2004) (MTAN1) required the preparation of Regional Technical Statements (RTS) for the areas covered by both the South Wales and North Wales Regional Aggregates Working Parties. The original RTS documents were completed in 2008 and were required, by MTAN 1, to be reviewed every



five years. The First Review had been undertaken in 2013/2014, and this, the Second Review (covered the 25 year period up to 2041), had been published in draft in July 2019. Due to the timescales for responding, Officers had agreed a response in conjunction with the Chair of the National Park Authority and the Chief Executive Officer. The main issues for the Authority were set out in the report.

The approach taken in the final report which was before Members mirrored that of the consultation draft and the concerns remained. Therefore it was proposed that the Authority noted the publication of, rather than endorsed, the Regional Technical Statement.

Appendix B of the RTS contained specific advice to the Authority with regard to future provision for aggregates. It advised that the Authority had been working with its neighbouring planning authorities since the previous RTS Review with a view to reducing the future extent of minerals working within the National Park. Whilst this was expected to continue, the National Park did have extant mineral permissions which made important contributions to the sub-regional supply pattern. The Authority was therefore required to make future provision for land-won primary aggregates within its Local Development Plan on the basis set out in the report.

Finally, it was reported that the RTS 2nd Review introduced a requirement for all Local Planning Authorities within each sub-region to produce Statements of Sub-Regional Collaboration (SSRC), as part of the evidence base needed to support each Local Development Plan. The purpose of the SSRC was to confirm that all constituent LPAs within a particular sub-region accepted the individual apportionments for their individual Authority areas, as set out in the latest review of the RTS, and that (as a minimum) the RTS requirements for that sub-region as a whole would therefore be met. In exceptional circumstances, a SSRC may identify an alternative pattern of supply which achieve the RTS requirements for that sub-region in a different way. Officers were seeking delegated powers to negotiate in the preparation the SSRC.

Thanking the officer for the explanation provided in her report, Members agreed they were happier to note the document than to endorse it. They were reassured that neighbouring authorities had respected the Authority's position in this matter and expressed their confidence in officers to negotiate on behalf of the Authority, however they suggested that it would be helpful to keep Councillor M James, as the Authority's nominated Member on the on the original Working Group, informed of discussions.

It was **RESOLVED** that:



- a) the publication of the Regional Technical Statements for the North Wales and South Wales Regional Aggregate Working Parties 2<sup>nd</sup> Review, September 2020 Main Document and Appendix B (South Wales) be noted.
- b) delegated authority be provided to the Head of Park Direction to negotiate on behalf of the National Park Authority in the preparation of a Statement of Sub-Regional Collaboration for the West Wales sub-region based on the approach set out in the Officer Comments in the report.

**11. To purchase land as part of the Sustainable Landscape Sustainable Places Funding for National Park Carbon sequestration and Supporting Biodiversity**

It was reported that funding from Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places Funding (SLSP) had been approved in June 2020 to support a number of proposals for decarbonisation in the National Park. The proposal, '*Land purchase for Sequestration for the Nation*' had been approved with a budget of £200,000 plus £20,000 management / delivery costs to be delivered by March 2021. The aim of the proposal was to support carbon sequestration and to increase biodiversity through increasing the area of land under perpetual favourable management for National Park purposes through land purchase by the National Park Authority.

After thorough research and investigation by officers across the National Park Authority into various land purchase opportunities both on and off the open market, the site at Trefin had been prioritised. This land was considered to deliver the best outcomes for biodiversity and carbon storage whilst also delivering on location and access for management and providing potential opportunities for community use and enjoyment. The cost of the land fell within the SLSP grant budget and the land purchase could be completed by the delivery deadline of the end of March 2021 as per the requirements of the grant.

Most Members were supportive of the proposal, believing that the Authority could use the land as an exemplar to show what could be achieved in terms of biodiversity and carbon sequestration using grassland, as well as benefitting the local community. However concern was expressed by one Member regarding the principle of the Authority buying land and the cost associated with maintaining it. It was questioned whether such benefits could not be achieved on land already owned by the Authority.



In response to these points, officers replied that ongoing maintenance of the land had been taken into consideration and the Authority had the capacity to undertake this. A map showing land already managed for the benefit of biodiversity was shown, however it was noted that much of this was not accessible. The land had been independently valued and £200,000 was considered to be a fair price.

It was **RESOLVED** that the purchase of the land at Trefin be endorsed, and that delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive and Chair to pursue purchase of alternative sites in the event that this one did not proceed.

## 12. Ancient Connections and Celtic Routes – Phase 2 Funding

Members were reminded that the Authority had been a partner in the above-mentioned EU funded initiatives since their inception. Both projects supported collaborative working across West Wales and the East of Ireland in order to strengthen the local and regional visitor economy in both countries.

Wales European Funding Office (WEFO) had provided an opportunity to extend both initiatives until May 2023 (Celtic Routes) and Sept 2023 (Ancient Connections) and had agreed formal 'Phase 2' support based on the 'in-principle' commitment of funding from those agencies involved, including PCNPA, as outlined in the associated bid documentation. Partner agencies were expected to contribute combined match funding equal to 20% of the total programme and the Authority's proposed contributions to both initiatives were set out in the report and totalled €121,852 consisting of both cash and staff time. Additional information was available in the business plans submitted to WEFO which would be made available to Members on request.

Members were supportive of the projects but asked whether the possible loss of physical connection between Pembrokeshire and Ireland as a result of Brexit would have any impact. The Director of Countryside, Community and Visitor Services advised that improved marketing was a large part of both projects and there were increasing opportunities from targeting the cruise ship market. The projects were working with Visit Wales and Visit Pembrokeshire and it was hoped that extension of the projects would bring significant EU funding to help aid struggling visitor economies.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Authority's contributions to both Ancient Connections and Celtic Routes initiatives as set out in the report be agreed, in order to further enhance the value and economic impact of tourism in Pembrokeshire and West Wales.



[Councillor M Evans tendered his apologies and left the meeting at this juncture.]

The Meeting was adjourned between 12pm and 12.10pm.

### **13. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report 2021/22**

Members were reminded that the remit of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) was to prescribe the salaries and allowances payable to Members by local authorities, including National Park Authorities, in Wales. Its draft Annual Report for 2021/22 had been published, and the main recommendations relevant to this Authority were set out.

Members' opinion was sought on whether to submit a response to the IRPW draft Annual Report, and if so, the content of such a response. The Administration and Democratic Services Manager noted that although the consultation period had ended on 23 November 2020, she had spoken to the Panel's secretariat which had agreed that they would accept any response the Authority wished to make.

Members asked that a response be sent to the Panel thanking them for their work, welcoming the provisions in respect of care costs and welcoming the fact that in determining payments to Members of National Park Authorities there was an expectation that Members would participate in training and development. The Chair of the Member Support and Development Committee added that attendance at such training by Members of the Authority was currently 85%. The issue of Welsh Government appointed Members having to pay tax on travel and subsistence costs was also raised, however as IRPW had previously made it clear that this did not fall within their remit, it was agreed not to include this point within the response.

It was **RESOLVED** that a response be sent to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales in response to their 2021/22 report thanking them for their work and welcoming the provisions in respect of care costs and also that in determining payments to Members of National Park Authorities there was an expectation that they were expected to participate in training and development.

### **14. Welsh Language Standards: Annual Report**

Members were reminded that the Authority was required to comply with the Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice issued to it under Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. Standards 158, 164 and 170 of the Compliance Notice required an Annual Report to be produced by 30 June every year and the report for 2019/20 was



presented for Members' consideration. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic and the consequent strict measures placed on everyone had resulted in the drafting of the report being delayed until now.

It was noted at the meeting that there was a typographical error on page 129 at paragraph 2.15 where the reference to the Waldo Williams Conference should have been to an Annual Lecture. Also prior to the meeting a question had been raised as to why the word 'customers' was used on page 124 at paragraph 3; a suggested alternative was the word stakeholders.

Members welcomed the report, but noted the decline in the number of educational sessions being provided through the Welsh language and wondered if any indication of the reasons for this could be provided. The Administration and Democratic services Manager replied that many of the activity and events sessions were demand led, so the reduction was due to fewer sessions being requested, and a paragraph to this effect could be added.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report be endorsed as the Authority's submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner subject to the changes set out above.

## **15. Appointment of a Data Protection Officer**

Members were reminded that the Authority was required to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and other relevant Data Protection laws. In May 2018, the Authority had appointed Paul Funnell as its Data Protection Officer (DPO); Paul was also employed by Brecon Beacons NPA (BBNPA) as its DPO. Paul was now leaving BBNPA and consequently his role with this Authority also and therefore the report outlined proposals to appoint a new DPO.

Following discussions with BBNPA, it was proposed to issue a joint tender to secure the services of a DPO. As an interim measure, and to ensure that the Authority was compliant with the data protection requirements, it was proposed to appoint Mair Thomas, the Authority's Performance and Compliance Co-ordinator as Interim Data Protection Officer.

Members were supportive of the proposals, with the proviso that Mair did not become overloaded as a result of this decision. The Chief Executive provided reassurance that should an incident occur, additional support would be brought in to assist her. They also wished to ensure that she had the opportunity to re-consider taking on the role permanently.



A question was also asked with regard to the tender process, and the Chief Executive advised that it was intended to secure a call-off contract to secure services for a minimum number of days with an option to obtain additional support should it be needed. Although a joint tender would be issued, each Authority would appoint individually and therefore pay for the services each required.

It was **RESOLVED** that the proposals to tender for the services of a Data Protection Officer be agreed, and the appointment of Mair Thomas as Interim Data Protection Officer for the Pembrokeshire Coast NPA be approved.

#### **16. Update the Sustainable Development Fund Committee Terms of Reference**

Members were reminded that in July 2020 the National Park Authority (NPA) had taken the decision to change the focus of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). Going forward, the Fund would support community projects that contributed towards a reduction in carbon and helped respond to the climate emergency.

The NPA had also approved the reduction in Committee membership from 12 members (6 NPA Members and 6 Advisory Members) to 6 NPA members plus 1 or 2 Advisory Members with skills and experience specifically in carbon reduction.

At its recent meeting, the SDF Committee had taken into account these changes and revised the terms of reference to reflect them, in addition to suggesting additional minor changes. The revised terms of reference were appended to the report and Members' endorsement of them was sought.

It was **RESOLVED** that the changes to the Sustainable Development Fund Committee Terms of Reference set out in the report be endorsed.

#### **17. Award of Funding in relation to the Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places programme for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority**

It was reported that the Authority had been awarded in year funding from the Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places programme 2020/21. The total amount allocated to the Authority under the programme was up to £1,743,000 and the following projects had been supported: Digital Transformation of the Authority; Installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points; Expansion of Sustainable Development Fund; and Land Purchase for Carbon Sequestration. Further detail of these were provided in the report.



Members noted that the largest sum of money had been given to the installation of electric vehicle charging points, and as a key tourist destination, fast charging points were essential. They were advised that there Authority was working with Pembrokeshire County Council to install points around the County, and details of where these would be located could be provided. Community groups could also apply for funding for charging points through the Sustainable Development Fund.

It was **RESOLVED** that the expenditure associated with Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places grant award and the ensuing amendment to the Authority 2020/21 Capital Programme be approved.

#### **18. Seasons' Greetings**

The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking officers and Members for their valued contributions to the meeting and wishing them a Happy Christmas.

The Chief Executive added his thanks to all staff for their work in continuing to provide the services expected of the National Park under difficult circumstances. He also wished to thank Members for their support and understanding in what had been a year like no other.

