

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: WELSH GOVERNMENT REMIT LETTER

Introduction

The Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs provides the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) with an Annual Remit letter. The Remit letter sets out the Welsh Government's strategic remit for Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority in 2021-22 and also outlines the funding settlement. A copy of the Remit letter is included as Annex A.

The main priorities outlined in the Remit letter are incorporated in the Corporate Plan.

Members are asked to note the Remit Letter.

Financial considerations

The Remit letter outlines the budget settlement provided by the Welsh Government.

Risk considerations

The Authority takes account of the Remit Letter when planning its work and managing risk.

Compliance

The Authority follows an agreed process for reporting on progress to deliver the outcomes identified in the Remit letter.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the Remit Letter from the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs.



Ein cyf/Our ref MALG/4422/20

Councillor Paul Harries
Chair
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

paulh@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

9th March 2021

Dear Paul,

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Remit for 2021-22

Introduction

This letter sets out the Welsh Government's strategic remit for Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (the Authority) in 2021-22.

In providing this, I recognise that National Park planning cycles are long term in nature. Therefore, while we will review and update this remit letter on an annual basis, many of the themes and objectives should be interpreted as being relevant to your organisation over a longer period.

2020 has brought many challenges, in terms of impact on your finances and also in managing unprecedented numbers of visitors. I am grateful for the dedication of your staff in working positively and proactively to overcome these challenges. I also appreciate the collaborative approach NPAs have taken with other bodies and with Welsh Government teams during the year. I believe that commitment to team working made our approach to managing our countryside more coherent and effective as a nation in one of the most challenging periods it has ever faced.

Funding

The financial climate remains challenging for 2021-22. Having listened to your concerns about the difficulties any reduction in core revenue grant would cause your Authority, I have decided to increase your core Welsh Government grant by 10% above that provided in 2020-21. This means that the core revenue grant from the Welsh Ministers to Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority for the 2021-22 financial year is £3,249,433.

We have only been allocated a one-year funding settlement from the UK Government. With the ongoing transitional period following EU exit, reconstruction from the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the lack of clarity in relation to the UK's fiscal prospects, this creates an unprecedented challenge for Welsh Government in developing our spending plans for the future. We are, therefore, not in a position to provide figures for 2022-23 and beyond, even at an indicative level.

The additional 10% funding is being provided to NPAs to allow recruitment of additional frontline staff such as wardens. There is potential for this recruitment to be targeted at young people, providing entry routes into conservation, land management and hospitality. It will also make NPAs more resilient in order to be able to contribute proactively to the Green Recovery. NPAs can promote sustainable tourism, decarbonisation, biodiversity and climate change mitigation measures but lack of capacity is holding back your potential. Resilient National Parks are essential to meeting a number of Welsh Government priorities laid out in this letter; this additional funding is allocated to better enable you to deliver in these areas.

In 2020-21 Welsh Government also provided significant additional funding to NPAs in recognition of the challenges they face and the important work they do. Collectively, that amounted to around £2.5m.

I have also secured £8.9 million in capital funding for the Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme, including up to £3m for the National Parks. This will build on the success of the SLSP programme in 2020-21, which, despite the considerable challenges caused by Covid, saw some innovative projects delivered. I am keen to see the fund continue to deliver on some of our greatest challenges and opportunities around decarbonisation, sustainable tourism, and recovery from Covid and am particularly keen to see collaborative projects delivered across different Designated Landscapes.

The financial settlement represents a strong vote of confidence in the National Park Authorities and their crucial role in our national life. It means strong and focussed leadership is required and I appreciate you may still have to make difficult decisions about your activities, maximising the resources you have at your disposal. I expect you to focus effort on those activities which deliver the greatest multiple benefits to Wales, while meeting your statutory duties, and at the same time continue pursuing opportunities to increase commercial income and collaborate more.

Strategic Agenda

As well as meeting your statutory purposes, National Park Authorities have responsibilities within legislation designed specifically for Wales. We are unique in the UK in having legislation that puts sustainable development at the heart of decision making; I attach great importance to our legislative framework.

The bold ambitions set out in the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** provide the strategic direction for all public bodies in Wales, including around Sustainable Development. You have already taken positive steps to align your planning with this Act and you should continue to reflect on and re-design your activities in light of its goals. Recent reviews and policy statements have emphasised the significant opportunities for collaboration nationally and locally for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to deliver on some of Wales's greatest challenges. These include the key Welsh Government priorities outlined below in relation to climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable tourism.

As part of achieving these aims, I am very pleased to have seen the establishment of a National Designated Landscape Partnership in 2020. I look forward to seeing that take root and flourish in 2021-22. The Partnership must creatively bring together our abilities and resources to respond to some of our greatest challenges. It must be a forum of equal partners that allows the potential of our AONBs to be unlocked, so they can play a greater role in our collective response to these challenges.

I fully expect this Partnership to be the driver for ongoing collaborative approaches in the future and will take a close interest in its progress.

Climate Change and Biodiversity

The National Assembly for Wales was the first Parliament in the world to declare a **climate emergency**. The next few years are important to drive action on climate change. Enabling renewable energy from appropriate technologies to better meet local energy needs, water management and carbon capture are vitally important in assisting Welsh Government to discharge the duty under the **Environment (Wales) Act 2016** to ensure that in 2050 net emissions are at least 95% lower than the baseline set in legislation.

The Welsh Government has an ambition for the Welsh Public Sector to be carbon neutral by 2030 and, through the SLSP programme, funds a number of decarbonisation projects to enable your organisations to support this ambition.

A key element of tackling climate change is our commitment to create at least 2,000 hectares of new woodland each year. We have significantly increased the budget for the Glastir Woodland Creation scheme. NPAs are important consultees for many new woodland plans and I would like you to ensure you are able to respond to consultations for new woodland in a timely fashion and help facilitate woodland creation in areas where it is appropriate. I would also like to see real engagement in the National Forest programme and its aim to enhance and create new woodlands to contribute to resilient ecological networks across the breadth of Wales.

The First Minister has committed to action to reverse the decline in biodiversity and National Parks continue to have a key role. Biodiversity underpins and drives the functioning of ecosystems and so, importantly, the Environment (Wales) Act includes the enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty which NPAs are subject to. A priority for designated landscapes is to improve the connectivity, condition, scale/ extent and diversity of ecosystems, and maintain and enhance resilient ecological networks. I would like to see continued action in this area in 2021-22.

Maintaining and enhancing resilient ecological networks is a nature based solution that has a role to play in mitigating the climate emergency and the decline in biodiversity, as set out in the refreshed Nature Recovery Action Plan. National Parks should also work with Natural Resources Wales through area statements to ensure that their plans and actions deliver our Natural Resources Policy.

The National Peatland Action Programme (NPAP) has been designed to restore, enhance and maintain resilient ecological networks, tackle climate change and manage water. The NPAs will be important delivery partners and should work with NRW to address the priority themes as set out in the 5 year NPAP framework.

Prosperity, Equality and Green Recovery

The Welsh Government is committed to a *Values Based Recovery* as we move from the immediate economic response to Covid-19 to a longer term renewal. The approach is underpinned by fairness and inclusivity, ensuring our reconstruction effort delivers a greener, cleaner, more sustainable economy. In other words, one which will help deliver improved well-being in all senses. To do so, economic efforts are being focussed on place, people, digital and green and just recovery.

A green and just recovery seeks to ensure that the recovery addresses underlying environmental and social challenges. For a recovery to be green it must address the Climate Emergency and the disproportionate impacts on the most vulnerable; improve Wales's resilience to a changing climate, such as increases in flood events and heatwaves; reverse the decline in biodiversity; and tackle unsustainable consumption, addressing not only its impact in Wales but also abroad. National Parks will be natural places to trial new approaches and develop best practice.

The Welsh Government's long-term aim is to build a Wales where everyone can live healthy, prosperous and rewarding lives. I expect NPAs to support resilient communities, creating opportunities and combating inequalities in health, education and aspiration. I would like to see renewed ambition in reaching out to people in Wales, inside and outside the Parks, to make sure everyone can enjoy the benefits participation brings, and to help provide pathways into employment. This aligns with the new Socio-economic Duty coming into force on the 31 March 2021 that requires public bodies, including NPAs, to consider how their strategic actions can deliver better outcomes for those who experience socio-economic disadvantage. Such an approach will also support NPAs in meeting their statutory duty to set objectives for tackling child poverty as required by our child poverty legislation. Enabling enjoyment of your special qualities is, of course, one of your statutory purposes. NPAs, working in partnership, have a key role to play in overcoming barriers to participation, such as transport.

Future Farming

The National Parks are home to agricultural communities who have worked in and shaped the landscapes around them for millennia. Sustainable farming is an intrinsic part of our landscape and can underpin many of the policy aims set out in this letter.

I am grateful for your input into our consultations around the direction of the future of agriculture as we leave the European Union, and look forward to your continued involvement as this moves into a more focussed design phase.

Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation

A central reason why visitors choose Wales is the quality and accessibility of the natural environment. Landscapes feature prominently within the Wales tourism brand and Visit Wales, in its new Tourism Strategy for Wales 2020-25, recognises their importance, and fragility. It has been evident how the demands placed on local infrastructure can harm the experience of visitors and put a strain on the relationship with local communities. Our outstanding landscapes are rightly acknowledged in that Strategy as one of Wales's key assets, while recognising the duty of care we have to ensure the special qualities people visit them for are not put at risk.

The global landscape and position in Wales has changed significantly since the plan was launched; however the fundamental principles still apply as we look to the future of tourism. I expect you to advocate for, and implement solutions to the pressures on local infrastructure, including transport. You must balance that with the importance of the tourism industry to the Welsh economy, and the role you play in meeting the needs of visitors by collaborating with partners to offer experiences that appeal to priority markets. You are aware that, in partnership with Natural Resources Wales, we are carrying out a detailed programme of work around reforming and simplifying access to the countryside. I welcome the National Parks' continued input into this important strategic programme, which will report to me in 2021-22.

Facilitating and promoting outdoor recreation is also an important part of delivering the Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales strategy, our long term plan to prevent and reduce obesity in Wales. The Healthy Environment theme of the strategy provides an objective regarding our active environment and how improving the quality of green spaces can support and motivate our communities. You will need to collaborate, and work with Natural Resources Wales and other partners, to support approaches which demonstrate positive physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Culture, Heritage and the Welsh language

National Park Authorities are also custodians of the historic environment and the built and cultural heritage within the Parks. You should work with partners such as Cadw, Amgueddfa Cymru, the Archaeological Trusts and others to safeguard, manage and interpret this important inheritance.

Designated Landscapes have an important role in increasing public awareness of the value of the Welsh language and facilitating its wider use - as part of our national heritage and as an important skill in modern life. I believe that the long term sustainability of many of our most sensitive landscape areas is intertwined with the sustainability of the Welsh language and its culture. You should continue to develop policies that ensure that people are able to live and work in their communities and that the Welsh language is able to thrive.

I look forward to working with you with a sense of common purpose and commitment over the coming year and beyond. I am keen to support Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority as you look to take forward both your own priorities and help respond to the challenges and opportunities for Wales as a whole.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Lesley Griffiths", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs

Cc: Tegryn Jones, Chief Executive Officer, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority