

# NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

3 February 2021

Present: Councillor P Harries (Chair)

Councillor P Baker BEM, Councillor Mrs D Clements, Councillor M Evans, Dr M Havard, Dr R Heath-Davies, 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

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am –12.40pm)

## 1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K Doolin, Mrs S Hoss, Councillor R Owens and Councillor A Wilcox.

## 2. Disclosures of Interest

Dr R Plummer disclosed a personal but not prejudicial interest in report 02/21 Corporate Plan 2021/22 and 03/21 Placemaking Charter but remained in the meeting and played a full part in the discussions and voting thereon.

## 3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 2 December 2020 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

It was noted that there was a typographical error in the penultimate paragraph of Minute 13 (the word remint rather than remit). Also in that same paragraph that regarding the matter of Welsh Government appointed Members having to pay tax on travel and subsistence costs, a sentence be added to say that this matter was ongoing and would be followed up by other routes.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 2 December 2020 be confirmed and authenticated subject to the above amendments.

## 4. Matters arising

### a) Notice of Motion – Mentor Service (Minute 7)

It was noted that this had been considered by the Extraordinary Personnel Committee on 13 January 2021 (Minute 6 (iii) refers) and a small group had been formed to discuss detailed implementation. Councillor Kidney would be attending tomorrow's meeting of the Authority's Staff Reps Forum to present the proposal and it would then be coming back to a future meeting of the Personnel Committee.



**NOTED.**

- b) To Purchase land as part of the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places Funding for National Park Carbon Sequestration and Supporting Biodiversity (Minute 11)

The Chief Executive reported that the land purchase was going smoothly and it was expected that the contract would be signed in the next week.

**NOTED.**

- c) Appointment of a Data Protection Officer (DPO) (Minute 15)

The Chief Executive advised that the closing date for tenders for the role was that day. He reassured Members that the Interim DPO was being supported to ensure that her workload was appropriately managed.

**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) which had discussed issues such as Brexit and EU funding; it had also launched the Rural Manifesto. He had also met with the Friends of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park alongside the Chief Executive.

In addition, the Chair had attended a two day online seminar by Natural Resources Wales entitled "Our Coasts and Seas" and also an online event on Pembrokeshire Meadows organised by Plantlife Cymru with excellent contributions by the Authority's Conservation Officers. Councillor Harries had received a copy of the Campaign for National Parks' electronic newsletter and he would arrange for this to be circulated to all Members.

He concluded by thanking both Members and staff for their continued support in the current difficult circumstances and hoped that that they and their families 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 21 October 2020;
- (ii) Youth Committees held on 10 November and 24 November 2020



- (iii) Personnel Committees held on 18 November 2020 and 13 January 2021;
- (iv) Operational Review Committee held on 16 December 2020;

It was noted that the Operational Review Committee had received an interesting report on usage of the Coast Path during 2020 and Members wondered whether there had been an increase in use of the inland path network during the lockdown period. The Chief Executive agreed to ask the Access and Rights of Way Manager to provide Members with the figures.

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

## 7. **Draft Budget Planning 2021/22**

The report set out the draft Revenue and Capital budgets for 2021/22 and forecast 2022/23 to 2025/26, the draft 2021/22 levy on Pembrokeshire County Council, Prudential Indicators for the capital programme and Investment Strategy & Treasury Management Policy Statement for 2021/22.

### Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2021/22 and Forecasts 2022/23 to 2025/26

With regard to the budgets for 2021/22, the report set out the Authority's budget strategy and the key assumptions on which this had been based, and as previously been discussed by Members in a budget workshop. The current forecast revenue position for 2020/21 was expected to remain at the breakeven position laid out in the budget approved in February 2020, despite the Authority's finances for the current year having been subject to significant uncertainty and turbulence. While it had been anticipated that the budget would be balanced by drawing down earmarked reserves, the loss of income as a result of the Covid-19 Lockdown had been compensated by Welsh Government and other grant schemes, meaning that £110k would be returned to earmarked reserves.

It was reported that the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2021-22 implied that the National Park Grant (NPG) for the three National Parks would increase by 10% for the 2021/22 year and revert back to the 20/21 level for subsequent years; the final budget was expected in March 2021. While the NPG/Levy would increase for 2021/22, future increases were uncertain, and it was noted that it had shown an overall reduction since 2010/11. Sensitivity analysis and forecasts had been carried out regarding the scenarios outlined providing the potential revenue budget position to 2025/26 (not 2024/25 as set out in the report).

The Authority had countered the reduction in core funding over recent years by making significant savings in its operating cost base (notably



employee costs), increasing income from other sources and attracting project specific grants. A summarised and more detailed revenue budget for 2021/22 was provided which showed additional efficiency savings and additional income from bringing on stream four additional charging car parks as well as 5% savings from non-salary related costs. It was expected that the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) grant would be used to offset some core costs.

The report also set out the Capital Programme for 2021/22, which forecast a spend of £1,432,900, with most of the projects funded by Earmarked reserves and other grant funding, notably the SLSP grant.

With regard to financial reserves and balances, it was anticipated that the general reserves balance at the end of 2020/21 was expected to be £1,008k and remain at this level until the end of 2021/22. In addition, the capital receipts reserve would be used to fund further capital expenditure in 2020/21 and 2021/22 and was therefore expected to fall to £165k by the end of 2021/22, with earmarked reserves also expected to fall to £2,798k by the end of the same period.

In conclusion, it was reported that the 10% increase in the National Park Grant and its impact on the Levy was welcome as it would help compensate for the budgeted reduction in Authority generated income streams, notably from its centres, as the Covid-19 crisis continued into the 2021/22 financial year.

Thanking the officer for a clear and helpful report, Members sought clarification on a number of points and this was provided. The Chief Executive agreed to provide a figure for the number of new positions created over recent years, as opposed to fixed term contracts linked to project funding.

Noting the significant capital spend on Electric Vehicle Charging Points, Members sought more information on the approach being taken by the Authority, and this would be provided. There was also discussion regarding the likely future for electric versus hydrogen vehicles.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Draft Budget 2021/22 be approved, subject to noting that the National Park grant/Levy was yet to be confirmed, and that the financial forecasts for 2022/23 to 2025/26 be noted.

#### Levy on Pembrokeshire County Council

The Chief Financial Officer reminded Members that Section 71 of the Environment Act 1995, sub-section 3, determined the way in which the levy which was to be raised on Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) should be issued. The following statement complied with this



requirement. The Chief Executive added that he understood that PCC received a sum of money from Welsh Government which was equivalent to the levy raised on them.

**Levy on Pembrokeshire County Council**



The Authority must authorise the making of a levy of £984,677 from Pembrokeshire County Council, in accordance with Section 71 of the Environment Act 1995 and the National Park Authorities (Levies)(Wales)(Regulations) 1995 SI 1995 No.3019 as amended by the National Park Authorities (Levies)(Wales)(Amendment) Regulations 1996:

•	the sum required to meet expenditure for the Authority which will fall to be charged for that year in the Revenue account is		£5,776,423
•	making such provision as is appropriate for meeting contingencies, the expenditure on which would fall to be charged in the Revenue Account		£Nil
•	the sum required to secure the availability to the authority of adequate working balances on its Revenue Account		£Nil
•	the sum required to provide the Authority with other requirements for covering any deficit brought forward from the previous financial year		£Nil
	Sub-total		£5,776,423
	LESS		
•	Section 72, Grant (NPG)	£3,249,433	
•	Income credited to the Revenue Account	£1,443,845	
•	other sums not covered above which are likely to be available in the year	-	£4,693,278
	<b>Levy requirement</b>		<b><u>£1,083,145</u></b>

It was **RESOLVED** that Members authorise a levy of £1,083,145 (or other appropriate amount as determined on receipt of confirmation of the approved net funding from the WG) from Pembrokeshire County Council for the year 2021/22.



### Prudential Code Indicators and Investment Strategy 2021/22

The Local Authorities (Capital Finance & Accounting) (Wales) Regulations 2003 required the Authority to have regard to the CIPFA Prudential Code in setting annual budgets. Members were asked to consider the advice of the Chief Financial Officer in determining an affordable, prudent and sustainable capital investment programme, as set out in the report before Members that day.

The report went on to present the Authority's Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Policy for 2021/22, which complied with statutory guidance and supported the prudential borrowing system. He confirmed that the only investments held by the Authority were bank deposits.

It was **RESOLVED** that Members **ADOPT** the Prudential Indicators as presented and **APPROVE** the Investment Strategy & Treasury Management Policy Statement for 2021/22.

### **8. Corporate Plan 2021/22**

It was reported that the draft Corporate and Resources Plan set out the Authority's Corporate Well-being Objectives, a requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and its aligned work programme for 2021/22 that would support delivery of these objectives. The Well-being of Future Generations Act required public bodies to act in accordance with the sustainable development principles and the document highlighted how these principles would be embedded in the work carried out to achieve the Authority's objectives. No changes had been made to the existing well-being objectives as the Authority would look to review these, and its priorities, in 2021/22.

The Plan presented was still very much a draft and Members were invited to approve the approach and comment on the content. Officers across the Authority had been involved in its development to date, and would have a further opportunity to comment before its final approval, which was anticipated to be at the March meeting of the Authority. At the meeting, the Performance and Compliance Coordinator reported that references to the Light Pollution Partnership and the recently published State of Natural Resources Report 2020 would also be included.

Members commended what they considered to be an interesting and informative document. They made wide ranging comments including being supportive of delivering placements through the UK Government's Kickstart scheme, and suggesting additional references to Placemaking, Natural Resources Wales Area Statements, the marine environment, water quality, Welsh Language and increasing diversity.



In terms of the mapping of the Authority's Work Steams to the Future Generations Act's 5 Ways of Working, 'citizen involvement' was suggested as being the weakest, and it was hoped that additional activities, beyond consultation, could be identified. Some concern was also expressed regarding the wide range of activities currently undertaken by the Authority and the proposed review of priorities was therefore welcomed.

## **NOTED.**

### **9. The Placemaking Charter**

It was reported that Planning Policy Wales along with the redrafting of the National Development Framework / Future Wales 2040 emphasised placemaking on a strategic level with the objectives of becoming better connected, reducing travel and boosting local services to enhance identity, character, sense of community and collective ownership through the planning system. Wellbeing was central to the placemaking process and gave importance to the need to work together to build better places. This would be achieved by applying a holistic approach to the planning process: one that considered the context, function and relationships between a development site and its wider surroundings.

The Placemaking Charter had been developed by the Placemaking Wales Partnership. This partnership was a multi-disciplinary group representing professions and organisations working within the built and natural environment. The Charter included six principles: People and Community, Location, Identity, Movement, Mix of Uses and Public Realm further details of which were provided in the report.

The Charter had been discussed with colleagues at Snowdonia and Brecon Beacons National Park Authorities, and officers considered that its principles were already being implemented through the respective Local Development Plans and decision making processes. The principles of the Charter did not conflict with the policies and guidance adopted within the Local Development Plan, it rather complemented them, and highlighted the main considerations in assessing any planning application. Further information on how the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan 2 complemented the Placemaking Charter was appended to the report.

Members were pleased to see the placemaking approach and hoped that a workshop on this matter could be arranged.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a. approval for Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority to sign the Placemaking Charter be granted;



- b. approval for the Charter to be signed as the three National Park Authorities of Wales be granted; and
- c. formal recognition be given to the approach to implementing the Charter to complement National and Local Planning Policies.

**10. Review of the Public Participation Scheme at Meetings of the Development Management Committee**

It was reported that this report had been withdrawn and would be brought back to a future meeting of the Authority.

**NOTED.**

**11. Regularisation of Land Ownership abutting Whitesands Beach**

It was reported that in 1972 the owner of the subject land had dedicated a public footpath running north/south across their land, which formed part of the coastal slope, to create a new section of footpath. Since that time, the Authority had acquired freehold ownership of an adjacent parcel of land, together with gaining control of the foreshore. These parcels of land had a collective importance for landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and public access.

It had recently been established that in 1990, the owner of the subject land had agreed terms to gift its ownership to the Authority. Whilst the Authority's practical actions of managing the subject land over the last 30 years as an extension of its land holding supported its practical acceptance of that gift, for reasons unknown its documentation by legal transfer of title was never completed and remained a 'forgotten issue' until recent events drew officers' attention to this historical oversight. The recent enquiries that they had made to the land owner had confirmed their requirement that the legal transfer should now be completed without further delay subject to the Authority bearing their legal costs which would not exceed £550. The Authority's own legal costs were likely to be a similar amount.

It was **RESOLVED** that the freehold acquisition of the subject land by way of documented legal transfer at a nominal consideration of £1 and a contribution towards the transferor's legal costs not exceeding £550 be authorised.

**12. Undergrounding of Power Lines at Black Tar, Llangwm**

This report was presented by the Director of Countryside, Community and Visitor Services as the Estates Officer had declared an interest in the matter as he lived close to the proposed scheme.

Encouraged by the success of its power line undergrounding initiative during the period 2010/15, Western Power Distribution (WPD) had extended the scheme into its current 8 year business plan commencing





1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 by allocating a further £1.3m to fund the undergrounding of those sections of their existing overhead electrical supply network which were considered the most damaging to the special qualities of four protected landscapes i.e. the Gower and Wye Valley AONBs and the Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire Coast National Parks.

A scheme had now been identified by Officers, and endorsed by the Western Power Undergrounding Initiatives Panel, to remove a section of the overhead cabling and poles at Black Tar (as indicated in the report) and replace it with an underground supply. Subject to obtaining the landowner's consent, it was anticipated that the actual work on site which WPD would need to undertake could be completed during the period 2021/22.

It was reported that Black Tar was located within the National Park on the western shore of the Cleddau River. Its rural character, estuary location, close proximity to Llangwm village, public slipway and network of riverside and inland public footpaths made it a popular location for public access and recreation. A heavily used section of that footpath network crossed a field of improved pasture land within a wider open landscape and passed directly underneath the high voltage Western Power Distribution (WPD) spur line. When walking the path in either direction this spur line was silhouetted against an open sky and was clearly visible within the wider landscape.

Officers were of the opinion that the proposed scheme represented an outstanding opportunity to achieve permanent visual benefits within one of the National Park's most iconic locations via the use of 100% external funding. It also offered the potential to be the eleventh undergrounding scheme delivered under this WPD initiative within our National Park.

Members were pleased to see a scheme which made such a difference to the landscape of the National Park and hoped that more such projects could be delivered in future.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report and attached selection criteria paper be endorsed, and officers' ongoing work towards securing the delivery of an undergrounding scheme at Black Tar as soon as reasonably practical be authorised.

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

### **13. Future provision of a catering facility at Poppit Sands**

It was reported that the Authority had a substantial land ownership at Poppit Sands which dated back to the late 1970's. Included within that



ownership was a single storey beach café occupying a monopoly trading location and providing a food/drink and traditional ‘bucket and spade’ retail offer.

The Authority’s long established management approach was to lease out the building to occupational tenants in return for a rental income. The current tenants would be vacating the building at the end of March (2021) at which time it would revert back to the Authority with full vacant possession.

Following an open marketing exercise to identify prospective new tenants willing and able to offer a catering facility under the terms of a new 10 year full repairing and insuring lease, 3 interested parties had been invited for interview. Judged against a selection criteria of rent/covenant strength, general business experience, catering specific experience and wider social context, a preferred prospective tenant had been identified. They were an existing business operating within the catering sector and based in the Cardigan area.

Having identified a preferred prospective tenant, officers’ next objective was to finalise negotiations with them and document the resulting new lease. The new tenants would then be able take occupation and commence their fit out works in readiness for the start of the 2021 summer holiday season. Both parties considered this to be a realistic and deliverable timetable.

Some Members were concerned at the length of the lease and questioned whether a bond was being sought. Officers replied that having considered the covenant strength and previous record of the business, they were content that a bond was not required. It was also noted that the Authority’s financial exposure with regard to the lease was limited to the income stream.

It was **RESOLVED** that the principle of granting of a new legal interest in land via the granting of a new occupational lease of the café at Poppit Sands on the terms outlined be agreed, with the final negotiation of terms and resulting lease documentation being delegated to the Authority’s Chief Executive for approval.

