

REPORT OF THE FINANCE MANAGER

SUBJECT: ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020/21

The Authority is required to produce an Annual Governance Statement and Members are invited to contribute to and shape the contents of the attached draft 2020/21 statement.

Recommendation: Members are asked to COMMENT on this report

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2020/21 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

I. Introduction

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (“the Authority”) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. It is a Welsh improvement authority under section 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and as such has a general duty under section 2 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised. The Authority is also a public body as defined under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act legislative requirement since 1st April 2016.

The Authority has an approved Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA)/Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (UK) (SOLACE) Framework ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Guidance for Welsh Authorities 2016. This guidance recommends that the review of effectiveness of the system of internal control that local authorities are required to undertake in accordance with the Accounting and Audit Regulations should be reported in an Annual Governance Statement. In Wales the inclusion of the Annual Governance Statement in the Statement of Accounts is voluntary. CIPFA also published an “Application Note to Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: A Framework”. This note has been developed to advise on the application of the “Statement of the Role of the Chief Financial Officer on Local Government” under the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government”. The Authority reviews and adopts any additional guidance as issued and has decided to adopt the CIPFA framework and Annual Governance Statement approach for 2016/17.

II. The purpose of the Governance framework

The governance framework comprises the committees, systems and processes, cultures and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks associated with the achievement of the Authority’s policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

III. The Governance framework

There is clear definition of the roles of Members and officers and a clear committee and decision making structure. This is based on:

The Authority

The Authority comprises 18 Members and will meet at least 6 times a year and its main functions are:

- To approve the development of the Authority's strategic corporate planning framework through the National Park Management Plan (every five years), the Local Development Plan (formal review required every 4 years), and the Corporate and Resources Plan (annually).
- To determine all policy matters in support of its strategic planning objectives. The Authority may receive advice from its committees and may also set up task and finish advisory groups to investigate and advise on specific matters.
- To determine all Service Standards and the Authority's Statutory Duties.
- To agree policies relating to the management of the Authority's resources i.e. finance, staffing and assets; and to approve the budget, levy, charges, and the Annual Accounts.
- To ensure that the Authority complies with all legislation affecting its services.
- To determine membership of other committees, task & finish groups, working groups and advisory groups, within the Authority, and their terms of reference, and the Authority's representation on external bodies and organisations.
- To determine the delegation of the Authority's responsibilities to other committees of the Authority and when appropriate to the Chief Executive.

Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee

The Committee will comprise 9 Members of the Authority to be selected and/or confirmed at the Annual General Meeting each year. The Committee meets quarterly, and its role is to exercise the powers and duties of the Authority in relation to the following functions:

1. Regulatory Framework
 - To monitor the Authority's performance against the National Park Management Plan
 - To oversee the production of the Annual Governance Statement and to monitor the Authority's performance against the associated Action Plan
 - To monitor the Authority's performance against the annual Strategic Grant Letter
 - To monitor performance against the Welsh Government's Standards relating to the Welsh language
 - To monitor performance against the Authority's adopted Service Standards
2. Audit Activity
 - To consider reports from the Wales Audit Office (e.g. the Annual Improvement Report, Annual Audit Letter) and to monitor the Authority's performance thereon
 - To consider reports from Internal Audit on the Authority's financial systems and controls
3. Finance
 - To consider quarterly reports on the Authority's financial performance and budgetary matters
 - To monitor the Authority's performance in relation to its Annual Statement of Accounts

4. Human Resources

To monitor the Authority's performance:

 - against its adopted HR policies
 - in relation to Health and Safety
5. Information Technology
 - To monitor the Authority's performance in relation to its Information Technology Strategy
6. Performance Management
 - To consider quarterly reports on the performance reporting management system and to monitor the Authority's performance thereon
 - To review the Authority's Risk Register in terms of Audit and Corporate functions and make any recommendations to the National Park Authority to change levels of risk
 - To consider reports of the meetings of the Continuous Improvement Group
7. Communications
 - To monitor the Authority's performance in relation to Communications and Marketing
8. Other issues
 - To review any issue referred to it by the National Park Authority, any of its Committees or the Chief Executive Officer
 - To determine an Authority response on any proposals that affect the National Park or the Authority, its powers, duties, functions and responsibilities, particularly but not exclusively, from central, regional or local government, neighbouring authorities, partnerships and other external bodies where the proposals are relevant to the functions of the Committee and where the Chief Executive considers that such response should be determined by the Committee

Development Management Committee

The Development Management Committee is made up of the Authority's 18 members, and is responsible for carrying out the Authority's statutory planning functions in relation to the determination of applications, appeals and enforcement matters, and allied issues relating to development and the regulation of uses and activities.

The terms of reference of the Development Management Committee are:

- (a) Except where those powers and duties have been delegated by the Authority to one of its officers and subject to its decisions being in conformity with the Authority's approved statements and plans the Committee shall exercise, with power to act, all the powers and duties of the Authority relating to the consideration of planning, listed building and conservation area applications, notification schemes, tree preservation orders, the control of development and the enforcement of such control, and other consultation schemes where appropriate.
- (b) Where Members resolve to take a decision, contrary to an officer's recommendation, which the Chief Executive, the Director of Planning or the Development Management Team Leader identifies as constituting a significant departure from an approved plan

or policy of the Authority, or as otherwise having significant implications for the Authority, the decision shall be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.

If, ultimately, the Committee's decision is contrary to the officer recommendation, there shall be taken a full minuted record of Members' reasons for rejecting the officer recommendation, together with a recorded vote.

- (c) To receive reports from time to time from the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) and other officers on the exercise of any functions relating to the control of development which may have been delegated to them.
- (d) To deal with all matters relating to the designation and administration of Conservation Areas.

Operational Review Committee

The Committee comprises 9 Members of the Authority, to be selected and/or confirmed at the Annual General Meeting each year. The Committee meets on a quarterly basis and considers reports to the Authority on its performance. The role of the Committee is:

1. To monitor performance and make recommendations to the National Park Authority in relation to the functions of:
 - Development Management
 - Park Direction
 - Countryside, Community and Visitor Services
2. To review the Authority's Risk Register in relation to the above-mentioned functions and make any recommendations to the National Park Authority to change levels of risk.
3. To review the Authority's financial performance in relation to the functions of the services referred to in 1 above.
4. To review any issue referred to it by the National Park Authority, any of its Committees or the Chief Executive.
5. To determine an Authority response on any proposals that affect the National Park or the Authority, its powers, duties, functions and responsibilities, particularly but not exclusively, from central, regional or local government, neighbouring authorities, partnerships and other external bodies where the proposals are relevant to the functions of the Committee and where the Chief Executive considers that such response should be determined by the Committee.

MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Committee Composition comprises 9 Members, comprising 6 County Council and 3 Welsh Government Members and may, from time to time and without setting a precedent, invite other Members to attend a meeting in relation to a particular area of expertise.

Quorum

3 Members, to include at least one County Council and one Welsh Government Member.

Remit

1. To oversee the delivery of support to, and development of, Members of the Authority.
2. To oversee the delivery of the Member Development Strategy, including Member induction and the Training Plan.
3. To develop an application for the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development and to recommend it to the Authority prior to submission to the Welsh Local Government Association.
4. To review the support available to Members and to make recommendations to the Authority as necessary.
5. To consider any other matter referred to the Committee by the National Park Authority.

Continuous Improvement Group

The Continuous Improvement Group consists of four Members of the Authority plus the Chief Executive. The membership includes the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Authority along with the Chairs of the two Review Committees. The Group has authority to invite attendance of other Members or officers if the work programme indicates that their attendance or experience would add value to its work.

Internal Audit

The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and governance arrangements is informed by the work of the Internal Auditors and their reporting to the Authority. This work is undertaken by Gateway Assure. The terms of reference for internal audit require that work is conducted in accordance with standards as set out in the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government. During the year Gateway Assure ceased operations and passed their open contracts on to TIAA. TIAA will provide an audit opinion which will be reported to the Authority.

External Audit

Audit Wales act as the Authority's external audit and make comments following their financial accounts and performance work and in the annual audit letter. They also express an opinion on the adequacy of internal audit work.

Section 151 Officer

Within the Authority the Finance Manager also acts as the Section 151 Officer. The Authority complies with the CIPFA "Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government". The Finance Manager is also a member of the Authority's Leadership Team.

Sustainable Development Fund Committee

The Authority has a Sustainable Development Fund Committee that consists of Authority Members and independent advisors who provide advice on the awarding of SDF grants.

The Executive

An Executive structure for decision making for officers is based on a Senior Management Team and a Leadership Team.

Principles of Governance

The review of the effectiveness of the Authority systems of governance is undertaken in accordance with the following 6 CIPFA principles:

- Focusing on the Authority's purpose, on outcomes for the community including citizens and service users and creating and implementing a vision for the local area
- Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose, with clearly defined functions and roles
- Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour
- Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk
- Developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective
- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

IV. Actions Taken During The Year

Previously identified Significant Governance Issues, the actions taken to tackle these issues and their evaluations are shown in the table below

Governance Issues Identified	Action to be taken	Evaluation
National Park Grant Funding	Continue to work with Welsh Government to respond to funding position and developing a medium term financial plan	
Business Continuity Plan requires updating.	The I.T. and Business Manager will rewrite the Business Continuity Plan	While many of the continuity arrangements have been tested the pandemic has resulted in a delay in the preparation of the plan. The rewrite will be completed in 2021/22
An internal report identified a number of minor Health & Safety issues to be addressed	The newly appointed H.R. Manager will review all Health & Safety and H.R. systems and polices	The issues identified have been addressed.
Responding to Impact of Brexit	In light on the decision to leave the EU the Authority continues to participate and contribute to opportunities to influence UK and Welsh policy on land management.	The focus has now moved to the medium and long term new legislative changes which will impact upon land management.
Review of how we work focused on current digital systems and identification of gaps to improve efficiency and collaboration across the Authority.	Review carried out. Recommendations provided. Office 2016 implementation across Authority complete.	“Necessity is the mother of invention”: during the pandemic the Authority has adopted various technology solutions in redesigning many of its business processes.
Improve communication of corporate policies and standards to staff.	Review of current standards and policies in place. Communication activities with staff. Review of induction.	Guidance issued to staff on COVID 19 situation and impact on Authority work and work place. Awaiting new share point system to be in place to look at how policies displayed on system to staff.
Replacement of Ffynnon Performance Management System	Scoping of replacement option. Procurement of new system. Training of staff.	Following review of external options in terms of cost and capabilities, an internal replacement performance reporting management system was developed. This system

		was deployed in January 2021.
Commence review of Authority priorities and well-being objectives	Scoping of review. Review initiated. Involvement of Members	Review has commenced.
Formation of Youth Committee/ Forum	Committee in place developed in partnership with Young People	Committee in Place, with Member representation.
Data Protection – Updated Privacy Notice in place for new website	Updated Privacy Notice in place	Overarching privacy notice on website updated on an ongoing notice.
Realignment of Carbon Emission recording with Welsh Government Methodology and environmental monitoring system in place	Calculation realigned. Environmental monitoring system in place.	New National Park Management Plan (NPMP) action plan on responding to climate change emergency approved in June 2020. Welsh Government carbon calculator methodology published in March 2021.
The Covid 19 crisis presents significant challenges for the Authority.	In the pursuit of delivering its objectives the Authority will work with Welsh Government, other regulatory bodies and partners to minimise the impact of the crisis.	This wasn't included in the last AGS and is commented upon elsewhere in the AGS

V. Review of Effectiveness

The Authority is responsible for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. This review is informed by the work of the Authority's Members and its Committees, internal and external auditors, other review agencies (as appropriate) and senior managers who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment. The normal process of review has been impacted by the delay in the production of the Annual Improvement Report from the Wales Audit Office.

The review is based on the six principles of the CIPFA Code of Corporate Governance.

Principle 1

Focusing on the Authority's purpose, on outcomes for the community including citizens and service users and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.

The Authority has been focusing on developing work to ensure that it is 'fit for purpose' to meet the challenges of the future.

Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks

The Authority, in partnership with other designated areas has undertaken work consistent with 'Valued and Resilient' priorities.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act

The Authority has worked with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) as an Early Adopter and undertaken Member and officer training with Brecon Beacons and Snowdonia National Park Authorities (NPAs). The Corporate and Resources Plan has been prepared to deliver against the seven Well-being Goals set by Welsh Government. The plan shows budget distribution across the Well-being Goals and the Authority's Well-being Objectives.

Demonstrating Strategic Leadership

The Authority approved a new National Park Management Plan (NPMP) 2020/24 in December 2019. Members had been involved with the development of the Plan through workshop sessions.

Corporate and Resources Plan

The three National Park Authorities in Wales have agreed to work to a common format of an annual Corporate and Resources Plan to meet the requirements of both The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. The Corporate and Resources Plan document sets out the Authority's Well-being objectives (which are also the Authority's Improvement objectives) and aligned work programme for the forthcoming year and acts as our Annual Improvement Plan Part 1. The Well-being of Future Generations Act also requires public bodies to act in accordance with the sustainable development principles and this document highlights how these principles are embedded in the work carried out to achieve our objectives.

Quality of Service

The Authority carries out surveys of the effectiveness of its service delivery through customer satisfactions surveys, performance against quality standards and by monitoring formal complaints which remain at a low level.

Performance Reporting Management System

The Authority has in place a performance reporting management system to ensure that we develop and manage a robust system of performance information to highlight the impact of the work undertaken by the Authority. Performance review committee reports are prepared from information captured on the performance reporting management system. External support for the Authority's Ffynnon performance management system ended in 2020/21. As a result following a review of external options in terms of cost and capabilities, an internal replacement performance reporting management system was developed. This system was deployed in January 2021.

Community Engagement

The Authority has endorsed Participation Cymru's 10 National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales. An engagement action plan has been developed to help focus and drive action in this area with three priority areas and three longer term areas. An engagement action plan group is in place to monitor implementation of the action plan and has representation from across Authority departments

The three priority areas within the engagement action plan are

- Engaging with people through National Park Management Plan implementation
- Development of mechanisms for young people to influence the work of the Authority

- Engaging Volunteers and Service Users

During 2020/21 the group also completed the self assessment on involvement included in a previous Audit Wales report.

The Authority established a Volunteer Forum, providing an opportunity for volunteers to learn more about the Authority and influence its priorities, policies and volunteer offer. The forum draws on volunteer representatives from across the volunteer offer, including representatives from Pathways, Volunteer Wardens, Youth Rangers and Activity Leaders. The Volunteer Forum continued to meet virtually during 2020/21.

Membership of Public Service Board

The Authority is an invited member of the Pembrokeshire Public Services Board (PSB). The PSB agreed the Pembrokeshire Well-being Plan, and the Authority's Corporate Plan reflects the Well-being Objectives in the Plan.

Welsh Language Strategy

The Authority has in place a 5 year Welsh Language Strategy and has developed SMART measures that sit under it. Under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, all local authorities in Wales must comply with a framework of Welsh Language Standards. Standard 145 requires the Authority to produce a 5-year strategy that sets out how we propose to promote the Welsh language more widely in the National Park. The strategy must also include a target (in terms of the percentage of speakers in the National Park) for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in the National Park by the end of the 5 year period concerned, together with a statement setting out how we intend to reach that target.

Socio Economic Duty

In preparation for the commencement of the Socio Economic Duty (under the Equality Act 2010) in March 2021, the Authority has been involved with Welsh Government engagement opportunities relating to the Duty. It has also reviewed its approach to Equality Impact Assessments, in order to take an integrated approach that includes Socio Economic Disadvantage considerations.

Principle 2

Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose, with clearly defined functions and roles.

National Park Grant and Levy

The NPG / Levy for 2020/21 remained unchanged from the 2019/20. As a result of the COVID 19 pandemic the Authority was in receipt of a number of Welsh Government grants which were used to offset the loss Authority generated income and additional Covid related operating costs.

Member and officer Joint Training & Development

The Authority actively promotes joint training sessions between Members & officers.

Consultations

Members have contributed their comments to responses to Welsh Government and other bodies' consultation papers including:

- National Development Framework
- Sustainable Farming
- Independent Remuneration Panel For Wales

Virtual Meetings and Web Casting

In response to COVID 19 and changes in legislation, the Authority held its Committee meetings virtually during 2020/21. Meetings were also web cast.

Employee Forum

The Authority has in place an Employee Forum. The purpose of the Forum is to provide a platform for Members and staff to maintain open and collaborative employee relations by discussing a range of employee matters and gaining an understanding from each other on issues facing the Authority.

Principle 3

Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.

A Code of Conduct for Members and a Code of Conduct for Officers is in place. Issues relating to breaking the Code of Conduct are dealt with by the following:

The Standards Committee

It is the responsibility of the Authority's Standards Committee to promote high standards of conduct by Members and officers. It does this by advising on and promoting awareness and understanding of the code of conduct for Members and the code of conduct for officers, both of which have been adopted by the Authority. During the year the members of the Committee increased from three to four.

Monitoring Officer

The statutory Monitoring Officer functions are set out in Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended) i.e., in short, to report to the Authority if the Monitoring Officer considers that any proposal, decision, or omission by the Authority may give rise to unlawfulness or maladministration.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has jurisdiction over the Authority's functions by virtue of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005. He has not made any investigation into the Authority either in relation to any alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct adopted by the Authority on 25 June 2008, or in relation to a complaint made against the Authority.

Staff Members

Issues relating to the conduct of staff are normally considered in accordance with the Authority's Disciplinary procedures. All Authority staff have annual performance appraisals. This process allows an opportunity for managers and staff to review past performance, highlight potential areas of concern and agree future objectives to ensure they are linked to service plan/corporate targets.

Whistle Blowing Policy

In the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 the Government has given statutory protection to employees who 'blow the whistle' by speaking out against corruption and malpractice at

work. It protects them against victimisation and dismissal. In its commitment to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability, the policy states “The Authority encourages employees and others with serious concerns about the Authority’s work to come forward and raise their concerns with the Authority”.

Safeguarding Policy

The Authority approved an updated safeguarding policy in December 2019. The policy had been revised to take account of changes to legislation (Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) and in the way these changes have been interpreted and delivered at a local level in West Wales. The new policy includes additional guidance and provides updates regarding processes and procedures. The policy aims to ensure that sound working practices are in place that put safeguarding as a priority and which are effective in managing risk for these vulnerable groups, but which will also protect staff and volunteers against wrongful or malicious allegations.

Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy

The Authority has in place approved an Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy. The policy covers all employees, volunteers and members of the Authority. It incorporates the changes to the bribery legislation that have been included in the Bribery Act 2010. The Bribery Act 2010 establishes criminal offences and individuals found guilty can face an unlimited fine and imprisonment up to ten years. Where an organisation itself is found guilty of the offence then the penalty is an unlimited fine.

Financial Standards

During the year the Authority revised its Financial Standards and Contract Standing Orders, the purpose of which is to provide a financial and procurement framework within which the Authority can operate. These will assist the Authority in ensuring that:

- Legislation is complied with.
- The assets of the Authority are safeguarded.
- The funds available are spent wisely and efficiently.
- Appropriate income generation is undertaken.
- Best value is achieved

Data Protection and GDPR compliance

Following the Authority’s external DPO leaving their post, the Authority appointed an interim internal DPO in December 2020, while tendering process for a replacement external DPO was carried out. The external DPO’s appointment was approved by Members in March 2021.

Principle 4

Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.

The Authority has taken the following action to improve its processes and structures and also to tackle identified issues of risk.

Risk Management

The Risk Register is presented to each meeting of both the Audit & Corporate Services and Operational Review Committees. It is regularly reviewed by the Leadership Team when current risks are reviewed and new risks evaluated.

Performance Management

The Authority has in place a performance reporting management system. External support for the Authority's Ffynnon performance management system ended in 2020/21. As a result following a review of external options in terms of cost and capabilities, an internal replacement performance reporting management system was developed. This system was deployed in January 2021.

Staff update the Performance reporting management system directly with information to update performance reporting on a regular basis.

Upgrading systems infrastructure

During 2020 the Authority undertook work on the following IT systems:

- Authority wide upgrade to Microsoft Office 2016 delivered.
- Voice over IP capability for Headquarters at Llanion.
- An upgrade to the Exchequer platform (Finance system)
- Upgrading all Authority infrastructure hardware platforms and associated server applications in order to ensure currency, security, resiliency and support.
- IT Response to the Covid-19 pandemic - enabled Authority staff to work remotely as effectively as possible whilst ensuring the security of Authority infrastructure and data.

Internal Audit 2020/21

As part of the Authority's corporate governance programme a risk assessment was made on all its services and formed the basis of the work carried out during 2020/21 by the Authority's internal auditors Gateway Assure. The focus of the Audit was on the following areas:

- Staff Wellbeing and Absence Management
- Departmental Review- Education
- Governance- Strategic Planning
- Budgetary Control and General ledger
- Planning Applications and Fees
- Review of Cyber Security
- Income Generation

Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion

At the Authority's Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee held on the 12th May 2021 the following audit opinion was given for 2020/21:

"TIAA is satisfied that, for the areas reviewed during the year, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority has reasonable and effective risk management, control and governance processes in place.

This opinion is based solely on the matters that came to the attention of TIAA during the course of the internal audit reviews carried out during the year and is not an opinion on all

elements of the risk management, control and governance processes or the ongoing financial viability or your ability to meet financial obligations which must be obtained by the Authority from its various sources of assurance”

Committees

Individual service team leaders update Members of their respective Review Committee with details of the work in progress within their respective teams. There is a clear documenting of decisions, meeting agenda and minute process. Members therefore make decisions based on timely and accurate information, although some decisions are deferred to allow Members more time for considered decisions.

Audit Wales Reports

Audit Wales passes an opinion on its review of the Authority’s performance and Statements of Accounts which is recorded in the AWO Improvement Assessment Letter and the ISA 260 report.

Audit Wales National Park Authorities –

During 2020/21 the Audit Wales carried out field work which focused on:

“Is the National Park Authority effectively managing its resources to secure its long-term resilience?” They carried out an online survey and focus groups with Members and staff to inform this work. The headline conclusion from the report was “The Authority has proved to be an adaptable and resilient organisation in the face of immediate disruptive threats but further work is needed to ensure this continues over the longer term”. The recommendations from the report are included in the Section VI – Significant Governance Issues

Annual Report on meeting the Well-being objectives

In 2020/21 the Authority published its Annual Report on meeting the Well-being Objectives (which also acted as our Annual Improvement Plan Part 2 under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011). This report sets out our performance on delivery in 2019/20 against the Authority’s Well-being Objectives.

Benchmarking

The Authority undertakes benchmarking activities across a number of areas. Key performance indicators within the annual Corporate and Resources Plan are benchmarked against other National Park Authorities where comparative data is available.

The Authority submits an Annual Performance Report every November as part of the Welsh Government Planning Performance Framework. The annual report discusses how the Authority has performed against the indicators, identifying what it had done well so that this can be shared with others, and what steps might be taken to address areas of performance in need of improvement. Through the Framework the Authority is able to benchmark its performance against other Planning Authorities in Wales. As a result of the COVID 19 pandemic the Authority was not required by Welsh Government to submit an Annual Performance Report in 2020/21. However the Authority has continued to submit to Welsh Government quarterly performance data to support benchmarking activities.

Principle 5

Developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective.

The Authority continuously looks to develop the capacity and capability of Members and during the year has undertaken the following:

Member induction

No new Members were appointed to the Authority in the last year, therefore no induction training took place. However, a training workshop on the Members' Code of Conduct, together with an overview of delegations to officers, was held.

Member Support and Development Committee

The Member Support and Development Committee meets on a quarterly basis and, over the last year, has reviewed the Personal Development Review framework for Members, encouraged Members to undertake their PDR, and has developed a training plan as a result of the process.

Wales Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development

The Authority currently holds Charter status, and is working towards applying for Advanced Charter status of the Welsh Local Government Association's Wales Charter for Member Support & Development. Subject to approval at the Authority meeting in March, a submission to that effect will be made.

Staff Development

Learning and Development needs are identified through the annual performance review cycle and this is then rolled up into a wider organisation Development Plan. The Authority will be drafting an annual Learning and Development Plan from 2021.

All new staff are 'inducted' on an individual basis when they start, and the Authority is currently reviewing its practices to deliver this on-line and in tandem with the other National parks. Mandatory and job related training is scheduled and refresher training undertaken periodically.

Professional Development Programmes are utilised through Pembrokeshire County Council and Academy Wales and supplemented by e-learning.

Employee Opinion Survey

A Staff Survey was rolled out and rolled back in 2020. Results from the survey will be used to formulate a plan of action which will be incorporated into the HR strategy and Plan. This will be the Authority's main tool in gauging staff satisfaction and helping to drive capacity and capability of Officers.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety is delivered through a dedicated Health and Safety Committee, which includes representatives from across the organisation. The minutes of these meetings are presented to Members and progress is tracked monthly.

Work is being undertaken to schedule a review of all HR and Health & Safety Policies, Procedures and Risk Assessments. Funding has been allocated to deliver some staff training

on-line, where this is possible, to ensure evidence and compliance. Progress has also been taken to progress accreditation towards the Welsh Government's Corporate Health Standard.

COVID Pandemic

Due to a need for the Authority to be able to respond effectively to changing circumstances as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic while also responding to longer term outcomes, the Corporate and Resources Plan 2020/21 was realigned and 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. Long term priorities and actions originally planned for 2020/21 that remained relevant were kept in the second section of the plan to support ongoing delivery of the Authority's Well-being Objectives.

Principle 6

Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

During the past year the Authority has sought to engage with local people and stakeholders through a range of consultations. Following last year's survey of community councils training sessions on planning have been provided to all who requested it.

The Authority proposes to continue to undertake consultation with residents, visitors, organisations and other stakeholders on a long term strategy on service delivery on the reducing funding anticipated over the next few years.

Strategic Plans

Following receipt of the Independent Inspectors report Local Development Plan 2 was adopted by Members in September 2020. Following this a work programme of consultation, review and adoption of supplementary planning guidance has commenced.

To support delivery of the National Park Management Plan the Authority has produced a range of action plans, including Responding to the Climate Change Emergency, Restoring Nature and Celebrating Heritage. Stakeholders have been consulted where appropriate as part of the development of these action plans.

Partnership working arrangements

The Authority works with a number of external bodies helping to improve value for money and in communicating with various other interest groups to deliver a number of common projects, e.g.:

- Carmarthenshire County Council; SLA's Payroll / Pension, Minerals
- South Wales Local Authority Purchasing Group
- Brecon Beacons & Snowdonia National Parks Authorities, brokerage Insurance; there has been significant engagement with Town and Community Councils on the changes in planning guidance and on Budget priorities for the Authority.
- Public Services Board
- National Park Partnership on corporate social responsibility options and other sponsorship funding
- The UK National Parks and National Parks Wales.
- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Charitable Trust
- Joint Planning Ecologist with Pembrokeshire County Council

Engagement with Young People

During 2018/19 the Authority focused on how it could improve engagement with young people in relation to governance and influencing the work of the Authority. The Authority's Youth Rangers attended the November 2018 NPA meeting and presented the Euro Park Youth Manifesto to Members. A subsequent meeting was arranged between Members and the Youth Rangers to further develop work in this area. PCNPA Youth Committee organised a residential weekend held 13th-15th March 2020 at the Pentre Ifan Centre near Newport. Over the weekend the Youth Committee got to know each other, developed its understanding of what the National Park is and the work of the National Park Authority, considered its priorities, how it will work and how it will link with the Members of the National Park Authority.

The Youth Committee, continued to meet in 2020/21, with Member representation.

Embedding Engagement across the Authority

The Authority has endorsed Participation Cymru's 10 National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales. An engagement plan is in place to help focus and drive action in this area with three priority areas and three longer term areas. An engagement action plan group monitors implementation of the action plan.

The three priority areas within the engagement action plan are

- Engaging with people through National Park Management Plan implementation
Development of mechanisms for young people to influence the work of the Authority
- Engaging Volunteers and Service Users

During 2020/21 the group also completed the self assessment on involvement included in a previous Audit Wales report.

During 2019/20 the Authority established a Volunteer Forum, providing an opportunity for volunteers to learn more about the Authority and influence its priorities, policies and volunteer offer. The forum draws on volunteer representatives from across the volunteer offer, including representatives from Pathways, Volunteer Wardens, Youth Rangers and Youth Rangers and Activity Leaders. The Volunteer Forum continued to meet virtually in 2020/21.

VI. Significant Governance Issues

The following table highlights governance issues identified during the year which the Authority targets to resolve within the next financial year.

Governance Issues Identified	Action to be taken
Take action to ensure that the Authority and the National Park is able to recover from the impact of the COVID pandemic	Review how we can ensure internal organisational efficiency and how we can support recovery in the wider community
Prepare for future financial challenges through reviewing the mid-term financial plan	Revise plan
Undertake a review of Corporate Priorities and develop a new strategy.	Develop a new strategy and undertake work to ensure that the Authority is able to deliver that new strategy
Undertake a review of procurement to take account of changes as a result of Brexit and the need to decarbonise the organisation.	Work with the other 2 Welsh National Park Authorities to review procurement.
Develop an effective Business Continuity arrangements it should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review the impact of its Business Continuity Plans during the response to COVID-19 with staff to ensure they are up to date and have the right actions and measures to help counter likely threats in responding to future emergencies; • ensure staff are aware of updated Business Continuity arrangements and understand the procedure for their use; and • members should provide the Authority with assurance that ICT Business Continuity arrangements are sufficient to enable officers and Members to deliver their responsibilities effectively and efficiently.
Improve workforce resilience the Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider the impact of the COVID-19 response and the switch to full remote working on staff wellbeing and identify how it can best support staff; and • ensure Health and Safety policies and procedures are updated to take account of new working arrangements.
Review the switch to online meetings and delegated decision making and identify opportunities to learn from its response to the	Undertake Review and develop appropriate policies to support this work

pandemic and strengthen governance arrangements.	
Work in partnership with organisations across Pembrokeshire to support the development of a new Well-being Assessment for Pembrokeshire	Engage with organisation as part of the Pembrokeshire Public Services Board

VII. OPINION

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the matters referred to in part VI to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

SIGNED _____
Chairman

DATED _____

SIGNED _____
Chief Executive

DATE _____

SIGNED _____
Section 151 Officer

DATE _____