

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

5 May 2021

Present: Councillor P Harries (Chair)

Councillor P Baker BEM, Councillor Mrs D Clements, Councillor K Doolin, Councillor M Evans, Dr M Havard, Mrs J James, Councillor M James, Mr G Jones, Councillor PJ Morgan, Councillor R Owens, Councillor A Wilcox, Councillor M Williams and Councillor S Yelland

[Dr R Heath-Davies arrived during consideration of the minutes of the Youth Committee (*Minute 5(ii) refers*); Dr R Plummer arrived during consideration of the item to appoint a Member to the Skomer MCZ (*Minute 6 refers*)]

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am – 12.40pm)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P Kidney. Dr R Plummer had advised she would be arriving late.

2. Disclosures

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 24 March 2021 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

In respect of Minute 10 relating to Committee Meeting Format Options Post Covid-19 Restrictions, the Chair of the Member Support and Development Committee had stated that attendance at meetings of the Authority and its Committees had increased from c 75% to 94% since they had been taking place virtually, rather than in person, and that this was another important consideration in the format of meetings going forward.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2021 be confirmed and authenticated subject to the above amendment.

3. Matters arising

The Wales Charter for Member Support and Development: Application for Advanced Charter Level Status (Minute 12)

The Chair of the Member Support and Development Committee thanked those Members who had emailed comments regarding the support they had received from the Democratic Services Team and these had been used as additional evidence in support of the Charter Application.

NOTED.



4. Chair's Announcement

The Chair noted that he had not attended any functions since the last meeting, however he hoped that with the easing of restrictions that would begin to change. He had, however, attended a number of meetings, including that of the PCNP Trust and he also highlighted a number of excellent sessions on dark skies which had recently been hosted by the Authority and one on Coastal Invertebrates by Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum. The Chair then congratulated the Communications Team as the Authority's work in communicating out of the Covid crisis had been shortlisted for a UK excellence award, and he thanked the Chief Executive and staff for their hard work and creativity.

NOTED.

5. 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 10 March 2021 and 12 April 2021.

Further to the request at the recent meeting of the Committee that the Authority review its public speaking policy, one Member drew officers' attention to Pembrokeshire County Council's policy which allowed members of the public to speak on a second occasion. He hoped this would inform the ongoing review. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that a Member workshop on this subject would take place in the near future and a revised policy would be presented to a future Authority meeting.

(ii) Youth Committee held on 16 March 2021.

It was noted that the Youth Committee was currently seeking new youth members and anyone interested should contact Tom Moses.

(iii) Operational Review Committee held on 17 March 2021

It was noted that the Committee had considered an interesting item on Ash Dieback and the Chief Executive confirmed that this item would also be discussed at the forthcoming Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee.

(iv) Chief Executive Performance Review Panel held on 17 March 2021

One Member sought clarity regarding the linkages between brands and marketing campaigns (Minute 4.5). The Chief Executive explained that concern had been expressed that there could be mixed messages as a result of the Authority being involved with a number of partnerships and projects, however he believed the amount of marketing was positive and that officers were aware of the potential problems.



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

6. Skomer Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Group

The Chair explained that he had received an email from Natural Resources Wales inviting the Authority to nominate a Member to sit on the above mentioned Group; it was noted that the Authority was already represented at officer level by the Biodiversity Officer.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor P Harries be appointed as the Authority's representative on the Skomer Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Group.

7. Audit Wales: Review of Resilience – Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

The Chair welcomed Matthew Brushett and Nick Selwyn from Audit Wales to the meeting. They explained that part of this year's performance audit had sought to answer the question, "Is the National Park Authority effectively managing its resources to secure its long-term resilience?" Overall it had concluded that the Authority had proved to be adaptable and resilient in the face of immediate disruptive threats, but further work was needed to ensue this continued over the longer term and further details were set out in the report. The Chief Executive advised that an action plan would be prepared and this would be reported to the Authority's Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee in due course.

Members welcomed the positive report and wished to congratulate officers for their work during a difficult time. With regard to the questionnaires used to help gather information, it was suggested that separate questions for Members and officers might have been more useful and there was also a request for summaries of the qualitative responses received. Picking up on one of the conclusions concern was expressed by some Members regarding the lack of workforce capacity which was identified as an ongoing risk to resilience and it was hoped that this would be addressed in the action plan. Finally it was noted that the report highlighted the risk of a drop in income for the Authority and one Member suggested that Audit Wales could be invited to a future workshop regarding commercialisation.

NOTED.

8. Consultation on a Draft High Level Strategy for the Authority

Members were reminded that the Authority was currently working to develop a new Strategy for the Authority. The report set out the key factors that had influenced the development of the new strategy, which was presented to Members, and they were asked to agree that an



external consultation be undertaken on the draft document to provide an opportunity for partners, stakeholders and members of the public to influence the future work of the Authority. Following the consultation, the strategy would be brought back to a future meeting of the Authority for approval.

Members liked the simplicity of the strategy and the graphics which supported it and had found the summary of legislation and policy documents set out in the report to be helpful. However they asked that in carrying out the consultation, the Authority was clear in what people and organisations were expected to comment on, to ensure there was a depth of engagement. The Chief Executive replied that this was the start of the process, and he did not envisage that this would be the only opportunity to comment on the document. As the strategy developed, further detail would be provided, however consulting on the high level strategy at this point would also act as a communication tool.

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft High Level Strategy be approved for consultation.

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

9. Annual Governance Statement

Members were reminded that the Authority was required to produce an Annual Governance Statement and their comments were sought on the draft 2020/21 statement. The Finance Manager noted that the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion to be found in Section 5 of the document was printed in red as this was yet to be presented to the Authority at the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee.

Thanking the officer for the huge amount of work that had gone into the statement, Members made a number of detailed comments at the meeting and advised that other points would be sent by email. The Finance Manager confirmed that the necessary amendments would be made and the final Annual Governance Statement would be presented to the Authority later in the year at the same time as the annual accounts.

NOTED.

[Councillor S Yelland tendered his apologies and left the meeting during consideration of the following report.]

10. Local Development Plan 2: Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) Consultations

The Head of Park Direction reminded Members that the Authority had agreed to publish Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) documents in



respect of Caravan, Camping and Chalet Development, Parking Standards, Community Land Trusts & Affordable Housing, Renewable Energy, Sustainable Design and Development, Archaeology and Biodiversity at its meeting in September 2020, and that the two latter documents were joint guidance documents with Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) and covered the whole of Pembrokeshire. It was understood that PCC would be considering the report of consultations on these Guidance documents at its Cabinet meeting on 17 May, and that if any substantive amendments were made, these would be reported to a future meeting of the Authority.

She went on to advise that public consultation had been undertaken between October 2020 and February 2021 and a report summarising the results and identifying recommended changes to the SPG was appended to the report before Members. They were therefore asked to consider the responses received and to adopt the new and updated SPG. The Head of Park Direction explained that in order to reduce the number of pages reproduced, only those on which changes had been identified had been included. Unfortunately one edit had been omitted in respect of representation 79, however this was described in Appendix A of the report.

Members thanked the officer and her team for the comprehensive responses to each of the representations and for the huge amount of work involved in producing the report. There followed some discussion on the vexed questions of second homes and camping and caravan site provision and officers advised that they continued to engage with partner organisations, including Welsh Government, in respect of these. One Member asked that additional information be included regarding language sensitive areas (Officer Response to Representation 4); also in respect of interpreting national guidance in a local context (Officer Response to Representation 14) and improving pedestrian access as part of the General Siting, Mitigation and Enhancement Guidance provided in the Caravan, Camping and Chalet SPG. The officer agreed to look at the wording on these matters to see if it could be improved.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Officers' responses to the consultation responses received in Appendix A and Appendix B be agreed.
- b) Supplementary Planning Guidance on:
 - (i) Caravan Camping and Chalet Development
 - (ii) Parking Standards
 - (iii) Place Plan – Community Land Trusts & Affordable Housing
 - (iv) Renewable Energy
 - (v) Sustainable Design and Development
 - (vi) Archaeology (Joint with Pembrokeshire County Council)



(vii) Biodiversity (Joint with Pembrokeshire County Council) be adopted, subject to the edits proposed in Appendix A and C of the report and agreed at the meeting.

- c) Delegated authority be provided to the Head of Park Direction to make further minor edits to include taking account of Pembrokeshire County Council's consideration of the representations on the two Joint Supplementary Planning Guidance documents (i.e. the Biodiversity and Archaeology Supplementary Planning Guidance documents). Any proposed changes by Pembrokeshire County Council which were substantive in nature would be reported back to the National Park Authority for further consideration.

11. Proposed Amendment to Standing Orders 5.1 and 5.4: Appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair

Members were reminded that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic last year, Welsh Ministers had introduced the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the Regulations"), which provided a framework for local authorities to convene virtual meetings of the Authority and its Committees using video and/or telephone conferencing software.

As a result, the Authority's Standing Order 5 relating to the appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority and its Committees had temporarily been amended to reflect the fact that it would not be possible to undertake a secret ballot for such appointments.

Since then, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 had taken effect which, amongst other things, extended the requirements of the Regulations and now allowed meetings to be held where some, or all, of the participants could be in different places at the same time, provided that – for National Park Authorities at least – all participants could be heard, but not necessarily seen by everyone concerned.

Moving forward, therefore, it was necessary to amend Standing Order 5 to enable the appointment process of Chairs and Deputy Chairs to take place irrespective of where Members were when they attended such meetings, and the report set out the proposed amendments.

At the meeting the Administration and Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that she would like to make two additional amendments to paragraph (ii) of Standing Order 5.4 (d) to remove the words "by remote access" and "additional".

While understanding the necessity to amend Standing Orders, one Member was unhappy that under these provisions it may not be possible for the ballot to be secret, and asked that as digital systems developed,



further consideration be given to programmes that allowed anonymised voting. The officer agreed that the matter would be reviewed should the format in which meetings were held change in the future.

It was **RESOLVED** that Standing Orders 5.1 and 5.4 in relation to the procedure for the election of Chairs and Deputy Chairs to the National Park Authority and its Committees be amended as follows:

Standing Order 5.1

- (d) To accommodate remote attendance at meetings pursuant to The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, a secret ballot will be carried out as follows:
- (i) Members will be invited to vote for one candidate only. Candidates shall be entitled to vote for themselves.
 - (ii) The meeting shall be adjourned for a period of time to allow each Member attending to email, telephone or text his/her vote to the Administration & Democratic Services Manager or an alternate named officer at his/her National Park Authority email address and/or telephone number. Should a Member/Members be attending the meeting at the Authority's offices, and the officer is also present, they shall be afforded the option of voting by ballot paper.
 - (iii) The officer shall count the votes received and follow the usual voting procedure, i.e. removing the candidate with the lowest number of votes and continuing – if necessary – with subsequent ballots carried out under the procedure set out in (ii) above until one of the candidates has received an absolute majority of the votes cast.

Standing Order 5.4

The Chair and Deputy Chair of a Committee shall be appointed at the first meeting of that Committee following the Annual Meeting of the Authority. The process for nominations to the office of Chair and Deputy Chair of a Committee shall be:

- (a) Nominations should be submitted in writing to the Democratic Services Manager or his/her team no later than 10 working days before the date of the meeting of the Committee.
- (b) If no nominations are received prior to the deadline of 10 working days, nominations will be invited on the day of the meeting.



- (c) If all Members are present in the same room on the day, the elections will be conducted in the same manner as referred to in Standing Order 5.1(c) above.
- (d) If some or all Members are attending the meeting remotely, the elections will be conducted in the same manner as referred to in Standing Order 5.1(d) above.

