

Operational Review Committee

1 December 2021

Present: Councillor K Doolin (Chair)
Councillor P Harries, Dr M Havard, Mrs J James, Councillor PJ Morgan, Dr R Plummer, Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor S Yelland

[Councillor M Evans joined the meeting during consideration of the report on the Beach Wheelchair and Outdoor Access Pilot Project (Minute 5 refers)]

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am – 12.15pm)

1. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Disclosures

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 22 September 2021 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2021 be confirmed and authenticated.

4. Conservation Report 2020-2021

The Conservation Report set out the outcomes achieved through the Authority's conservation work during the financial year 2020-21 and this illustrated the substantial amount of work undertaken across a range of activities, despite the restrictions required by the Pandemic. It was noted that the main contributors internally were officers in Park Direction, the Warden Teams and the Ranger Service.

The report set out the land management monitoring results for 2020-2021; specific examples of achievements under the 'Conserving the Park' scheme; progress made on the management of Authority owned sites; a report on partnership projects and collaboration; progress on the Stitch in Time project; and a brief assessment of species monitoring results and their interpretation.

Members congratulated all officers concerned on a comprehensive and positive report despite the restrictions, and suggested that there might be scope to develop the skills of volunteers and landowners to undertake monitoring in instances where officers were unavailable or unable to



travel due to restrictions. They expressed some concerns regarding the time delay before the introduction of Welsh Government's Sustainable Farming Scheme, and also the limited funding available for the Authority's Conserving the Park scheme. The Biodiversity Officer agreed that a gap between the end of the agri-environment scheme and the beginning of its replacement could hamper the progress that had been made on small-scale farms. The officer also provided an update in respect of the work at Penlan and in response to a question from one Member reported that as a predominantly farmed landscape, the Authority's work in respect of coastal grazing and the Conserving the Park scheme married the elements of farming and biodiversity recovery to show leadership among the National Parks in this area of land management.

In respect of the Conserving the Park scheme, the Chief Executive added that while increased funding could not be promised, tackling the loss of biodiversity was one of the Authority's key priorities and he hoped that additional resources could be sourced which would support that work.

Noted.

5. Beach Wheelchair and Outdoor Access Pilot Project

It was reported that beach wheelchairs had been made available by the Authority working in collaboration with local businesses and partners for over 12 years. The arrangements had been paused over the summer of 2020, although ad hoc availability had been achieved with pick-up and drop-off at Llanion.

Furlough and business closure/shut down, along with increased safety considerations, meant that to get the beach wheelchair fleet back up and running for availability during summer 2021 and beyond would require a significant amount of focused work. There was a need to rebuild or develop relationships with local businesses/communities to host the chairs with 'COVID safe' procedures and therefore a 6 month post had been initially created to develop opportunities for people with disabilities or health conditions to have access to a beach wheelchair, as well as develop information and resources. The post had now been extended for one year on a part-time basis.

The end of project report had been made available to the Committee and this set out some of the challenges faced in developing the project and putting systems and processes in place, highlighted some of the events which the project had supported and included many instances of positive feedback from users.

Members congratulated officers on their achievements, and were humbled to read about the huge difference that the wheelchairs had



made to those who had used them. It was suggested that additional feedback could be obtained through the borrower agreement and that further promotion could be sought through tourism/accommodation providers in the county. Another Member expressed the hope that the project could be further developed to promote the use of all terrain wheelchairs in the Preseli's and also to look at the use of motorised chairs. Officers replied that they agreed there were opportunities for use of the Mountain Trike in the north of the Park and this was an area for development. With regard to motorised chairs, it was noted that they offered great opportunities, however they required much greater maintenance and therefore additional resources.

Noted.

6. Performance Report for the Period Ending 30 September 2021

The report followed the structure of the Corporate and Resources Plan for 2021/22. This followed the approach of the Well-being of Future Generations Act with seven well-being objectives, with an additional section providing general governance information. Activities responding to Covid 19 recovery had been mainstreamed into work streams under each of the well-being Objectives.

The report presented the performance to 30 September 2021 for monthly data and quarter 1 to quarter 2 (April – September) for quarterly statistics, and went on to highlight relevant statistics in respect of the work of the Authority's various teams and departments.

Members thanked the officer for a clear and detailed report, particularly for the explanations provided for those actions which were coded as red or amber. The Chief Executive noted that decisions on some workforce issues and funding matters had been delayed until the structure of the Authority and its ways of working were agreed following the current re-prioritisation exercise. In reply to another question, he also noted that the Business Continuity Plan would be reported to the Authority in due course.

Congratulations were given on the reported improvements in the planning statistics, but some Members considered that this was an area that needed to be monitored due to the potential impacts of emerging Welsh Government policy. Information was provided to the Committee on action taken to improve response times for Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and Members requested that consideration be given to providing them with an annual report on FOI requests made.

Finally the Chair of the Authority noted that having walked the Coast Path in September, he had received many congratulations from fellow walkers on the state of the path, and he commended the walk to everyone.



Noted.

[Councillor A Wilcox tendered his apologies and left the meeting during consideration of the following item.]

7. Risk Register

Members were asked to consider the latest Risk Register. In the absence of the Finance Manager, the Chief Executive reported that as a result of the Assurance Review of Risk Management undertaken by TIAA, the Authority's Internal Auditors, and the recent Workshop at which it had been discussed, changes had been made to the register and these were highlighted in the covering report together with the top 5 risks for the Authority. He added that further work would be done to update the Register itself in the coming weeks to implement other Internal Audit recommendations. One such recommendation was that the Risk Register be considered by only one of the Authority's Committees, and therefore there would be a report to the forthcoming National Park Authority seeking to change the Terms of Reference of this Committee so that in future the Risk Register would be considered only by the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee.

Members commended the recent Risk Workshop, and agreed with the recommendations set out in the Review. It was hoped that there would be further discussion on risk appetite and that consideration would be given to assigning ownership of individual risks and production of a shorter corporate register, with other sub-registers managed by individual Committees/teams which could feed into it. It was also agreed that 'deep dives' relating to specific areas were important and could be delegated to individual Committees.

Turning to specific risks, Members believed that the progress update in respect of Risks 6 (failing to maintain high levels of governance), needed to be updated, and it was considered that additional risks should be included in respect of the Authority's restructuring and re-grading exercise, more general tree and animal disease risks, diversity of the workforce, new legislation in respect of phosphates and second homes. Finally it was considered that Risk 9 (Impact of Climate Change) was very broad and could be sub-divided into many risks and the Chief Executive noted that additional work in this area was already being undertaken.

Noted.

8. Continuous Improvement Group: delegation of issues

There was some discussion regarding the role of, and need for, this group. The Chief Executive replied that both the Audit and Corporate



Services and Operational Review Committees had the ability to delegate issues to the group, however no issues had been raised in recent years. The Group had been created for a particular reason many years ago, and had been retained so that it could consider any serious issues should they arise. However in light of Members questions, he would consider the implications of disbanding the Group and report back to a future meeting.

It was **resolved** that there were no issues that needed to be delegated to the Continuous Improvement Group for consideration.

