

National Park Authority

9 February 2022

Present: Councillor P Harries (Chair)

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

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am – 11.10am; 11.20am –1.00pm; 1.30pm – 2.00pm)

1. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Disclosures of Interest

A personal and prejudicial disclosure of interest was received from Councillor D Clements in respect of Reports 03/22 Welsh Government consultation: Planning Legislation and policy for second homes and short term holiday lets and also 04/22 Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan. Personal disclosures of interest were received from Councillor P Harries and Dr M Havard in respect of 01/22 Draft Budget Planning 22/23; Councillor Baker in respect of Report 06/22 Major Events Strategy; and from Dr R Plummer regarding Reports 03/22 and 05/22 PCNPA Volunteering Review and Volunteering Policy.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 15 December 2021 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 15 December 2021 be confirmed and authenticated.

4. Matters arising

South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) (Minute 8)

The Chair noted that he and the Chief Executive had attended three meetings of the CJC and the Chief Executive reported that the view of the Committee was that local authorities constituted its core membership, and that National Park representation should be limited to the strategic planning function. However the case would continue to be made for representation on Overview and Scrutiny Committees and in other areas as the work of the Committee developed. The Chief Executive was pleased to advise that no financial contribution would be sought from the Authority in the coming year.



Noted.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair noted that Covid restrictions had continued to limit in-person activities with the Tenby Boxing Day Swim, which the Authority was to have sponsored, having been cancelled. He had, however, attended a garden celebration for the 100th birthday of Dr George Middleton of St Davids who had long standing connections with the National Park. The Chair had also attended, virtually, three CJC meetings, two meetings of National Parks UK Chairs, a National Parks Wales meeting to discuss the Second Homes consultation, a positive meeting with the Friends of the National Park and a Europarc marine environment seminar. He had also attended a meeting of the PCNP Trust as one of the Authority's representative Trustees. He concluded by informing Members that it was not his intention to stand in the forthcoming local government elections and would therefore cease to be a Member of the Authority in May.

A number of Members and officers thanked the Chair for all his work for the Authority and for announcing his intentions in a timely manner.

Noted.

6. Reports of meetings of various Authority 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 8 December 2021 and 10 January 2022;
- (ii) Human Resources Committee held on 24 November 2021;
- (iii) Operational Review Committee held on 1 December 2021;
- (iv) Youth Committee held on 7 December 2021; and
- (v) Sustainable Development Fund Committee held on 19 January 2022.

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

7. Notice of Motion

The Chair reported that a notice of motion (NoM) had been received from Councillor P Kidney that the Authority enters into negotiation with Lamphey Community Council, and any interested parties, to either gift or sell land in Freshwater East, for the provision of a children's play area. This was proposed and seconded.

The Chair advised that in accordance with Standing Order it would now be referred to the Operational Review Committee for consideration at their next meeting on 16 March 2022, and, as they were not a decision



making Committee, their recommendation would be reported back to a future meeting of the Authority for determination. Although Councillor Kidney was not a Member of the Operational Review Committee he would be invited to attend that meeting.

One Member questioned why the NoM was not being considered by the full Authority that day, and he was advised that Standing Order 8.5a) provided that if the subject matter of any Motion came within the province of any Committee, it should to be referred without discussion to it. It was noted that NoM had been considered by the Authority on previous occasions only where there was no appropriate Committee at which it could be discussed.

It was **resolved** that the Notice of Motion that the Authority enters into negotiation with Lamphey Community Council, and any interested parties, to either gift or sell land in Freshwater East, for the provision of a children's play area be referred to the Operational Review Committee for consideration.

8. Draft Budget Planning 2022/23

The report set out the draft Revenue and Capital budgets for 2022/23 and forecast 2023/24 to 2026/27, the draft 2022/23 levy on Pembrokeshire County Council, Prudential Indicators for the capital programme and Investment Strategy, Reserves & Treasury Management Policy Statements for 2022/23.

Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2022/23 and Forecasts 2023/24 to 2026/27

With regard to the budgets for 2022/23, the report set out the Authority's budget strategy and the key assumptions on which this had been based, and as previously discussed by Members in a budget workshop. It was noted that should wage inflation be higher than the 2% budgeted for, the excess would be funded from general reserves. The current forecast revenue position for 2021/22 was expected to show a surplus of £595k, and this would be used to create two new earmarked reserves for Decarbonisation and the Redevelopment of the Green Room and to augment an existing reserve for authority restructuring. With the projected nil revenue budget surplus, the General Reserve balance was therefore expected to remain at £1008k, Capital Receipts were expected to remain at £370k and Earmarked Reserves decrease to £4,529k as at the end of the 2021/22 financial year.

It was reported that the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2022/23 implied that the National Park Grant (NPG) for the three National Parks would remain at the 21/22 level; the final budget was expected in March 2022. While the NPG/Levy would remain unchanged from 2021/22, 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.

The Authority had countered the reduction in core funding over recent years by making significant savings in its operating cost base (notably employee costs, with salary costs having been retained at the same level despite wage increases), increasing income from other sources and attracting project specific grants. Although there had been a reduction in authority generated income due to the pandemic, the trend had been very positive, with most sources of income improving. A summarised and more detailed revenue budget for 2022/23 was provided and the budget had been balanced due to support from the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places grant scheme.

In response to questions from Members, the Finance Manager advised that the Authority would be protected from increases to heating bills as its current contracts ran until August 2023. Also that the budget for centre income had been set at 90% of the 2020/21 level as uncertainty over Covid remained. However it was hoped that the budget would be exceeded.

The report also set out the Capital Programme for 2022/23, which forecast a spend of £1,126,500, with most of the projects funded by Earmarked reserves. It was noted that the most significant project was the Green Room Redevelopment and Members expressed concern regarding the potential for escalation of material costs. The Finance Manager reassured Members that a 10% contingency had been included and the project would be carefully monitored by a Committee which included both officers and Members.

With regard to financial reserves and balances, it was anticipated that the general reserves balance at the end of 2021/22 was expected to be £1,008k and remain at this level until the end of 2022/23. In addition, the capital receipts reserve would be used to fund further capital expenditure in 2022/23 and was therefore expected to fall to £118k by the end of 2022/23, with earmarked reserves also expected to fall to £3,542k by the end of the same period.

Members thanked both the Finance Manager for a comprehensive report and the Chief Executive for his effective leadership of the Authority. The professionalism of the Estates Manager in his advice regarding the Authority's assets was also highlighted. The Chief Executive thanked Members for their kind words and paid tribute to the work of all staff, but particularly those at the Centres.



It was **RESOLVED** that Members authorise a levy of £1,083,329 (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 2022/23.

Prudential Code Indicators and Investment Strategy 2022/23

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, Financial Reserves Policy 2022/23 and Treasury Management Policy for 2022/23, 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 Financial Reserves and Investment Strategy & Treasury Management Policy Statements for 2022/23.

9. Draft Corporate Plan 2022/23

It was reported that the draft Corporate and Resources Plan 2022/23 set out the Authority's Corporate Well-being Objectives and Statement, its steps towards reaching those objectives and how it would carry out the sustainable development principles as required under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. It was noted that that the Authority was no longer required to produce annual improvement plans, a previous requirement of the Local Government Measure, and this provided an opportunity to take a fresh approach to the plan.

Members were reminded that at its previous meeting, the Authority had approved for consultation a revised set of Well-being Objectives and this was currently under way. It was noted that in the draft Corporate and Resources Plan, amendments had been applied as track changes in terms of the Conservation Well-being Objective to indicate potential rewording of the Objective to take account of comments made by Members at the December NPA. Proposed amendments to outcomes under this objective and the Connection Objective had also been applied as track changes.

It was noted that 2022/23 would be a transition period for the Authority as it moved to consolidate its activities to support delivery of its new Well-being Objectives and high level priorities. A section on managing change had been included to support this transition, and a number of Delivery Plans would be created to support and measure effective delivery.

The Plan presented was still very much a draft and Members were invited to 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 at the bottom of page 11 of the Plan part of a sentence had been omitted as follows "... focusing on where these interventions can have the most impact. Interventions will be carried out on our own estate and by continuing to advise and work collaboratively with landowners, farmers and other stakeholders, to manage their land ..."

Thanking the officer for a clear report, a number of Members said that they would send suggestions for minor changes directly to her and hoped these could be considered as part of the consultation. The officer confirmed that the closing date for comments as part of the public consultation was 4th March and welcomed any further comments. Members also noted that not all of the Authority's Committees were included in Section 6 Corporate Areas of Change and it was also felt that greater emphasis should be placed on the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 in delivering the principles of sustainable management of natural resources. The officer agreed to take these points on board.

Finally, one Member questioned whether the impacts set out in the introduction were ambitious enough, however the Chief Executive explained that as this plan was one of transition, it was hoped that work that was currently being undertaken would allow stronger and more focussed action in future years.

Noted.

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

[The meeting was adjourned between 11.10am and 11.20am]

[Councillor D Clements disclosed a personal and prejudicial interest in the following two items and left the meeting while they were being discussed.]



10. **Welsh Government Consultation on Planning Legislation and Policy for Second Homes and Short-term Holiday Lets**

It was reported that Welsh Government had issued the above mentioned consultation which focussed on issues arising where market housing with no occupancy controls was used as either second homes or short-term lets. It noted that the issues were complex and would require multi-faceted solutions, many of which would not be planning related, such as taxation and licensing.

The consultation sought views on three main proposals – amendment of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 to create new use classes for Primary homes, Secondary Homes and Short-term Holiday Lets; related amendments to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 to allow permitted changes between the new use classes and; amendments to Planning Policy Wales to make it explicit that, where relevant, the prevalence of second homes and short-term holiday lets in a local area must be taken into account when considering housing requirements and policy approaches in Local Development Plans. The Authority's response was appended to the report.

Members agreed that this was a difficult and complex issue and were pleased that Welsh Government were taking some action, even though some believed this should have been done twenty or thirty years ago, and that for some communities it was now too late. They agreed that further research and piloting was essential to avoid unintended consequences and that evaluation of this would be needed to measure the impacts over time. A number of specific points were raised, both prior to and at the meeting, and the officer agreed to incorporate these within the response as they didn't change the thrust of what had been suggested.

It was **resolved** that the covering report and attached consultation response be approved as the Authority's response to the Welsh Government Consultation on planning legislation and policy for second homes and short-term holiday lets subject to inclusion of minor comments made by Members.

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

11. **Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan**

It was reported that Welsh Government had issued a consultation on the Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan, which was one of their key priorities. It considered how national interventions to protect Welsh-speaking communities and allow the language to thrive could be



supplemented by other initiatives. Many of the initiatives would be trialled in the Dwyfor area of North Wales, and this consultation explored how the collective package of interventions could be complemented at a community level to support and protect the Welsh language.

The report outlined the main proposals set out as part of the consultation and the Authority's response. The full response was appended to the report, and Members' comments on this were sought.

Members agreed that this was a complex subject, however the view was expressed that the vibrancy and vitality of a community could be helped by people moving into an area and that many were happy to embrace its language and culture. However concern was expressed regarding the practicality of the proposal to work with estate agents to explore innovative approaches to housing sales, with more detail required of how this would work in practice. Further detail would also be welcomed on how place names would be protected.

It was **resolved** that agreement of the final response to the Welsh Government on the Welsh Language Communities Housing Plan be delegated to the Head of Park Direction, in consultation with the Chair and Chief Executive.

12. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Volunteering Review and Volunteering Policy

The Director of Countryside, Community and Visitor Services introduced this report by highlighting the fact that Volunteers had been contributing to the work of the National Park Authority and helping the Authority to achieve its purposes for at least fifty years. There were currently around 200 volunteers registered, and they undertook a variety of tasks, including practical conservation work and work at National Park Centres, and opportunities continued to be developed.

The Discovery Team Leader went on to explain that in recent years there had been increasing recognition of the health and wellbeing benefits of volunteering. This, combined with the fact that people were living longer, had increased the demand for volunteering opportunities. In order to develop volunteering in a sustainable way the Authority recognised that it needed to build stronger foundations by establishing good practice, putting policies and procedures in to place that strengthened the relationship between staff and volunteers and increased, improved and diversified its offer to potential volunteers. To this end, a review of the Authority's work with volunteers had been undertaken by consultants and their report was presented to Members. It made a number of recommendations based on their findings and these would be used to develop an action plan for the development of volunteering going forward.



Also presented was the Authority's Volunteering Policy, which provided a framework for the Authority to meet its legal responsibility and duty of care in its volunteering activities, and established a set of clear principles and good practice for those involved in volunteering activity.

The Chair wished to record his thanks to all of the Authority's volunteers for their contribution, saying that it was much appreciated and of huge importance. It was noted that many of the volunteers in the photographs were from an older age group, and it was hoped that additional work could take place to engage with a younger demographic through organisations such as Young Farmers, Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and citizen science projects. Noting that there was some engagement with young people, through for example Youth Rangers, officers acknowledged that this was a gap and actions were being undertaken to address this, such as offering volunteering opportunities at the weekend. Another Member hoped that these more mature volunteers could be encouraged to take up a role in mentoring young adults with learning difficulties as engagement with this group would be mutually beneficial; a lack of reference to Welsh language opportunities was also noted.

Turning to the documents, Members welcomed the initiative to undertake a strategic review, and were pleased to note that their endorsement of the recommendations was not being sought, but that an action plan would be developed to take the work forward. They advised caution regarding references to 'work' as the distinction between staff and volunteers needed to be clear. Also some comments were made regarding the order of the Objectives set out in the Policy and the Discovery Team Leader reassured Members that these related to the previous Volunteer Strategy, and it was anticipated they would be reviewed.

It was **resolved** that:

- a) The report "A Strategic Review of Volunteering" be noted and an Action Plan developed to take forward the appropriate recommendations;
- b) The PCNPA Volunteering Policy be adopted.

[The meeting adjourned for lunch between 1pm and 1.30pm]

[Councillors P Baker, P Kidney, A Wilcox and M Williams tendered their apologies and left the meeting.]

13. Pembrokeshire Major Events Strategy 2022 - 2027

It was reported that the Pembrokeshire Major Events Strategy had been developed jointly by the Authority, Pembrokeshire County Council and



Visit Pembrokeshire in order to provide a policy and operational context for major events in Pembrokeshire. The strategy, which was attached to the report, formed a key component of the Pembrokeshire Destination Management Plan with a focus on developing the visitor economy outside of the main tourism season.

The Strategy focussed primarily on larger events that had the potential to promote a positive image of Pembrokeshire to both residents and visitors and aimed to facilitate funding streams from the Welsh Government Major Events Unit; provide focus for a more joined up approach to events development; and provide focus for Visit Pembrokeshire's work on attracting new events.

Members considered the Plan to be well written and easy to read, and welcomed the encouragement for major events in the National Park to achieve Sustainable Events Accreditation (ISO20121), particularly as the experience in recent years was that Pembrokeshire became very busy during the summer months. A question was asked regarding the need for funding to support the Strategy, however the Director replied that at present there were no financial implications, with any requests for funding in respect of individual events being dealt with on a case by case basis.

It was **resolved** that the Pembrokeshire Major Events Strategy 2022-2027 be adopted.

14. Calendar of Meetings 2022/2023

Members were reminded that the current calendar of meetings came to an end in June 2022 following the Annual General Meeting and therefore a calendar for the forthcoming year was presented.

Members had also been made aware of the need to rearrange a number of meetings prior to June and details of these were also set out in the report for completeness.

It was **resolved** that the calendar of meetings for 2022/23 be approved.

15. Home Working & Hybrid Working Policy

Members were reminded that at the November meeting of the Authority a Home Working Policy had been presented for approval, following a discussion at the Employee Forum in March 2021 on the future of work in the 21st Century and recent experiences of home working. Feedback had been provided by Members at that meeting and the Human Resources (HR) Manager had been asked to present a revised policy to a future meeting.



The revised Policy now before Members was more inclusive and set out a relationship with staff built on mutual trust, but had been drafted to mitigate against any risk associated with insurance, data security, taxation, health and safety and other risks of home working.

At the meeting, the HR Manager noted a typographical error in section 11 (site, not sight) and an addition to section 16 to reflect that meetings could also be held by virtual means.

Separate to the Policy, he also added that in January 2022, staff working from home had received a one-off payment for out of pocket expenses. This was within HMRC guidelines and staff had been made aware that this did not set a precedent for future years.

Members thanked the officer for what they described as an exemplary policy, and for incorporating their comments as provided at the previous meeting.

It was **resolved** that the Home Working & Hybrid Working Policy be adopted.

<p>The Minutes of this meeting were confirmed at the meeting of the National Park Authority on 30 March 2022 without amendment.</p>

