

**REPORT OF ADMINISTRATION & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER
AND DEPUTY MONITORING OFFICER**

**SUBJECT: GENERAL UPDATE ON MEMBER SUPPORT AND
DEVELOPMENT**

Purpose of report

To update on matters relating to Member support and development.

Buddying scheme

Members will recall that, at their meeting held on the 14th July 2021, they were provided with feedback on the buddying project that had been undertaken with the then newly appointed Welsh Government Members. The Committee had agreed that the process was worthwhile, and officers were tasked with reviewing the scheme in light of the feedback received.

Attached at Appendix A is a revised document for the Committee's consideration. It is intended that this document will be provided to all newly appointed Members in future, with the encouragement that they take up the opportunity to be buddied.

Member induction programme

A number of new Members will be appointed to the Authority following the local government elections. Some, if not all, will be entirely new to this Authority (and, possibly, to local government) therefore it will be necessary to provide them with the relevant induction in order to get them acquainted with how the Authority works.

A draft induction programme is attached at Appendix B for Members' consideration, which sets out the proposed timescale for delivery. Existing Members will also be welcome to join the sessions, if they so wish.

Member attendance

Member attendance to date at meetings is 88% (target 75%), while Member attendance at training events is 62% (target 65%). Anecdotal evidence suggests that, while Members would prefer face-to-face meetings/workshops, remote working has enabled them to attend more than would normally be the case. The current way of meeting has also substantially reduced the Member and officer carbon footprint by not having to travel to meetings.

Risk considerations and compliance

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 places increased requirements on all local authorities in Wales in relation to corporate governance and Member support and development. The Authority has developed a strong ethos of Member development over the years, ensuring that it continues to have informed Members who can make decisions based on understanding, skills and experience. Building upon, and developing, the good work carried out to date will re-emphasise the fact that the Authority works to a high standard of governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That, subject to any comments raised at the meeting, Members:

- 1. adopt the revised Buddying Scheme;**
- 2. agree the draft Member induction programme, and**
- 3. note the Member attendance figures.**

(For further information, please contact Janet Evans, Administration & Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer by e-mailing janete@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk)

**PEMBROKESHIRE COAST NATIONAL PARK
AUTHORITY**



MEMBERS' BUDDYING SCHEME

May 2022

INTRODUCTION

Joining a new organisation can sometimes be a daunting experience, irrespective of the new Member's professional/career background. Buddying provides the ideal opportunity to help new Members settle in and find their feet quickly.

WHAT IS BUDDYING?

Buddying is a voluntary, confidential, one to one relationship in which a newly appointed Member uses a more experienced/senior Member (the "Buddy") as a sounding board for guidance. It is a light-touch approach aimed at enabling new Members to "grow" into their role in terms of skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour. It also helps new Members settle and orientate themselves within the Authority, and signposts them towards relevant officers and/or other sources for the information they need to do the role required of them. It can be a "fixed-term" or ongoing relationship, which will allow the person being buddied to find their own way, assisted by their Buddy.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

An experienced/senior Member takes on the role of supporting and, if appropriate in the longer term, mentoring a new Member. They are paired up with one another so that the Buddy can help guide, support and act as a sounding board to the newly appointed Member.

The "agenda" will primarily be set by the new Member, as only they know what knowledge/information they require. Initially, the focus may well be on offering information and guidance but, as the relationship develops – and the new Member gains confidence – the Buddy may act in more of a facilitating role.

This means helping the new Member to become self-directed, confident and competent, both personally and professionally. It definitely isn't a question of building up a relationship of dependency, nor is it about telling someone what to do! It's about helping with "how we do things around here"; signposting to relevant officers and/or information and about learning who does what, how and where.

It is also important to stress that those involved will maintain independence and impartiality at all times and the relationship can last for as long as both parties agree that it is helpful. Either party has the ability to dissolve the relationship when it has run its natural course, or if the pairing is not compatible or productive.

THE BENEFITS OF BUDDYING

- ✓ New Members feel welcomed into the Authority over a sustained period of time, and know they have somebody to whom they can turn;
- ✓ New Members gain a deeper understanding of their role and have an opportunity to develop into the role in a way that suits them and the needs of the Authority;
- ✓ It helps new Members operate more effectively, using their Buddy to air and work through any problems/difficulties they may encounter, and providing them with a sounding board for ideas;
- ✓ The Buddy role itself offers new challenges and interest for existing Members and can help them develop their own skills, and update their ideas and techniques;
- ✓ Acting as a Buddy can be personally extremely fulfilling as the Buddy witnesses a colleague gain in confidence and flourish in their new environment

WHY DO WE NEED BUDDYING AT THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY?

A buddying scheme would provide new or existing Members with the opportunity to improve their skills and knowledge of specific areas within the Authority. It would help Members better understand how things work which would, consequently, help make more informed decisions on how best to utilise the Authority's resources. It should enhance personal learning in relation to self-awareness, attitude and self-confidence when supporting the community and dealing with other Members.

It is envisaged that, as Members gain further experience, responsibilities and roles, they may wish to progress and participate in a more formal mentoring scheme.

HOW DOES BUDDYING DIFFER FROM MENTORING?

Whereas buddying has a more light-touch, signposting and orientation approach, mentoring is a deeper relationship with a more structured framework, with the agenda and goals being set by the Mentee. The process is supported by a framework (or contract) that both parties sign up to and work through, which sets out the Mentee's goals/aspirations and the way forward to achieving them.

WHAT SKILLS DO I NEED?

A Buddy must be:

- ✓ Enthusiastic
- ✓ Committed

- ✓ Willing
- ✓ Approachable
- ✓ Experienced
- ✓ Non-judgemental
- ✓ An active listener
- ✓ Able and willing to provide constructive feedback

A Buddy must also have:

- ✓ Respect for their new 'partner'
- ✓ Empathy with their partner's new position (after all, the Buddy has been there before!)
- ✓ The ability to help their partner reach their own decision
- ✓ A commitment to confidentiality
- ✓ The ability to inspire
- ✓ An awareness of their position as a role model

Likewise, the new Member must be:

- ✓ Willing:
 - ✓ to be buddied;
 - ✓ to take responsibility for their own learning, and
 - ✓ to end the relationship if it is not working, or they feel they no longer need the support
- ✓ Committed
- ✓ Enthusiastic
- ✓ Proactive in identifying their needs
- ✓ Receptive to what their Buddy has to say
- ✓ Prepared to be honest and open
- ✓ Able and willing to provide feedback on how they think the relationship is working out

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

By volunteering!

Guidance and training can be provided to all Members interested in becoming involved.

