

Chief Executive's Performance Review Panel 16 March 2022

Notes of meeting

Attendees:

Cllr Paul Harris (Board Member and Chair)
Cllr Di Clement (Board Member and Deputy Chair)
Dr Rachel Heath-Davies (Board Member and note taker)
Tegryn Jones (Chief Executive)

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Disclosure of interests

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Notes of meeting 21 October 2021

The notes of the panel held on 21 October were confirmed by email prior to the meeting.

4. Review of Chief Executive's report on performance against set targets and objectives for the reporting period.

The Chief Executive's report for this panel was received in advance of the meeting and presented item by item.

4.1. The following progress was reported against the **financial management** and post COVID lessons learned objective:

4.1.1. The CEO explained that the financial picture was favourable and considerably more positive than had been predicted at the start of the covid pandemic. It was true to say that due to healthy income generation that was above what had been forecast, due to being conservative given the situation, the financial position looked a lot more positive than expected. The Chair noted his support for the way the CEO had managed the finances.

4.1.2. While the National Park Authority ends the financial year with a positive picture, the CEO is cautious for the future, and drew on the WLGA advice to plan on the basis of 4% increases in costs. There was a follow up question on whether 4% should be used for both staff and non staff costs and there was a discussion on how this would inflate the figures and the panel agreed that planning for various scenarios would be helpful.

4.1.3. The Chair asked about plans to lobby Welsh Government for additional funding and also for funding certainty over a three-year period or for the term of Government. The CEO explained that there were discussions afoot about longer term financial settlement models, but nothing had been decided as yet.

4.1.4. The CEO also explained that the recurrent allocation was one of a number of income/ funding sources, with grants, sponsorship and Trust

income available, as well as the Park's own income generation. He also outlined the potential opportunities to secure other sources of funding from within Welsh Government in future, such as the potential for accessing funding from elsewhere in the Climate Change Department.

4.1.5. There was a question on plans to use reserves as recommended in the audit reports. The CEO explained that there were some structural challenges in the system blocking this however he felt there were opportunities on the horizon through the restructure e.g. decarbonisation investment could be significant and also some new posts will bring with it fresh ideas.

4.2. The second objective discussed was progress on agreeing a **new strategy and structure**.

4.2.1. The CEO explained that the staff consultation was due to commence on 4 April for 28 days and subject to the outcomes of the consultation, the decision would be discussed at an extraordinary HR committee during May. The timeline was acknowledged to be tight, however due to some delay, this also now had improved the potential outcomes, in that there may not need to be any forced redundancies.

4.2.2. There was a discussion about the change in gear and fresh ideas that would be brought about through new strategic appointments. The CEO explained that he was keen for these new recruits into senior positions to take the mantle and lead positive change.

4.2.3. The Chair asked whether there was any planned engagement with all Members and the CEO agreed to share the consultation when published on 4 April and the panel agreed that a briefing session should be arranged for Members.

4.3. The third objective discussed was regarding **biodiversity and climate change** and the progress reported was as follows:

4.3.1. The CEO acknowledged that he had not made as much progress on the **marine** national park as he would have liked but reassured the Chair that he would progress it over the next year. He explained that there had been changes in personnel within Welsh Government that had hampered opportunities to raise the issues in detail to date, but he was optimistic that this would be possible shortly.

4.3.2. The panel discussed progress on **decarbonisation** and the CEO felt that this was an area in which the Park was leading and that PCNPA had become the reference point for others. This might open up other areas and opportunities for the Park in future.

4.3.3. In relation to **biodiversity**, the CEO updated the panel on the possibility that Welsh Government may be introducing a similar Agri Environment Scheme that's been introduced in England. If so, this would provide an excellent opportunity to broaden our network and reach among the farming community within and on the fringes of the Park boundaries. DC responded by saying she felt we already had experience in this area as we had already reached out to farmers and there would be further opportunities to build on those initial exchanges and networks going forward.

4.3.4. RHD asked about the **projects** that had been highlighted as at risk in recent progress reports and were often subject to cyclical funding. The Chair also added that he thought Stitch in Time had been agreed would

be viewed as a mainstream activity and not treated as a project any longer. Managing invasive species would be a long term rather than short term responsibility for the Park. The CEO agreed that this was the intention and also added that there were others currently reliant on grant funding such as Walkability that needed to be integrated into the mainstream remit of the Park under health and wellbeing. The CEO concluded by committing to transferring these projects into mainstream activities as part of the restructure.

4.4. **Health and Wellbeing** of staff was the next objective to be discussed by the panel with the following main points being made:

4.4.1. The CEO reported that the health and wellbeing of staff was always a priority and during and since COVID 19 it would be even more so going forward. He felt that there had been peaks and troughs in staff morale throughout the pandemic and that it could be challenging fully reading the mood especially when so many staff were working from home and in some cases, he had not seen some in person for some time now, so it was sometimes more difficult to gauge.

4.5. Progress against the objective on **external stakeholder engagement** was discussed as follows:

4.5.1. The CEO explained that it had been tougher to truly network and connect as mostly meetings were still online and this was simply not the same as seizing opportunities face to face with people around the fringes of meetings.

4.5.2. There was a discussion on the challenges being faced in Brecon National Park at the moment and how this could be affecting their overall capacity to work across three national parks, as well as the overall risk to the reputation of the parks in the short term, but it was felt that this would come right again in the longer term.

4.5.3. The CEO explained that he welcomed hosting Landscapes Wales and he was proud that PCNPA was supporting several AONBs and indeed had covered some key activities. The Chair noted that the Park's involvement was important and welcomed in that regard.

4.6. And finally, the panel discussed developments with the Wales Coast Path and National Trails, raised in the CEO's report. The initiative planned to promote the coast path as a destination for its anniversary was welcomed by all the panel members and the CEO was asked to highlight this to all the Members in a future meeting.

4.7. The CEO was asked to **revise the objectives** for the next reporting period and circulate these to panel members for comment. RHD requested that the revised objectives include lessons learned from covid and adapting the physical estate, including the Green Room. (Annex 1)

Annex 1

CEO Objectives for 2022-23

- i. Ensure that the resources of the Authority are managed effectively with consideration given to mid to long term financial planning and taking account of the challenges of inflation and increased costs, including Members in the process, raising staff ambition, building efficiency and resilience through new ways of working and seeking opportunities and innovation through new sources of funding;
- ii. Complete the corporate review, focusing on changes to the structure of the Authority and undertaking a Pay and Grading Review, with the aim of ensuring the Authority delivers its agreed strategy;
- iii. Build on existing work to develop and implement initiatives on land and within the marine to enable the Authority to increase its impact in tackling climate change and nature recovery;
- iv. Support the health and wellbeing of staff and learn the lessons from changes implemented over the past two years leading to improvement in staff satisfaction and looking to achieve the Welsh Government Corporate Health Standard;
- v. Work with partners and engage external stakeholders to continue to raise the profile of the Authority and influence policies across priority areas outlined in the Authority's priorities; and
- vi. In anticipation of a minimum of 4 new NPA members this year, ensure that they are supported by effective induction into the role.