

National Park Authority

20 September 2023

Present (In Person)

Councillor D Clements (Chair)

Councillor S Alderman, Dr R Heath-Davies, Councillor PJ Morgan, Councillor B Price and Councillor M Wiggins.

Present (Remotely)

Councillor SL Hancock, Dr M Havard, Mrs S Hoss, Mrs J James, Councillor M James, Mr GA Jones, Councillor R Jordan, Councillor S Skyrme-Blackhall, Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor C Williams BEM.

Also in attendance:

Tegryn Jones (Chief Executive), James Parkin (Director of Nature Recovery & Tourism), Richard Griffiths (Head of Finance), Sara Morris (Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement), Martina Dunne (Strategic Policy Manager), Michelle Webber (Head of Nature Recovery), Gayle Lister (Planning Officer), Mair Thomas (Performance and Compliance Officer), Sarah Mellor (Conservation Team Leader/Lead Ecologist), Sue Burton (Marine SAC Officer), Caroline Llewellyn (Democratic Services Manager) and Georgia Jones (Democratic Services Officer).

[Councillor C Williams joined the meeting before consideration of the Chair's announcements]

[Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock and Remotely 10.00am – 11.30am; 11.40am – 13.15pm]

1. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Owens and Dr RM Plummer.

2. **Disclosures of Interest**

Councillor B Price disclosed a personal interest in report 30/23, the Local Development Plan 2: SPG Consultations.

3. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 26 July 2023 were presented for confirmation and signature.

On the proposal of Councillor S Hancock, seconded by Mrs J James, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 26 July 2023 be confirmed and signed.



A Member requested that it be recorded on the Action Log that an internal review of the Pay & Grading review take place once completed.

4. Action Log

a) Cyber security training (minute 11 – National Park Authority 14/12/22)

It was reported that the Lead Member for Cyber Security, Dr R Plummer, and another Member had been successful in accessing the training.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Dr R H Davies, it was **RESOLVED** that the link for the training would be re-circulated to Members with a completion deadline of the 15 November 2023.

b) The greater use of the Welsh Language in meetings (minute 8 – NPA 10/05/2023)

In response to a query raised by a Member, the Democratic Services Manager confirmed that she was in the process of confirming a date for the next Welsh Language Strategy Working Group meeting and would circulate this to Members as soon as possible.

c) Workshop to discuss income generation including self-evaluation checklist (minute 7 – NPA 21/06/2023)

It was confirmed that the workshop had been organised for the 4 October 2023 however it was subject to change (Members would be updated) as interviews for the Head of Finance may take place on this date.

d) Mair and Tegryn to meet with Chairs of Audit and Operational Review to discuss Member accountability in relation to Delivery Plans (minute 9 – NPA 26/07/23)

The Chief Executive confirmed that all parties were in conversation to secure a date for the meeting.

Noted.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that she had attended the following events:

- The Pembrokeshire County Show where she visited the stand of Country Land & Business Association and NFU and presented the Simmental Championship Cup (cattle competition). The Chair also met with Lesley Griffiths (Minister for Health & Social Services) and Mark Drakeford (First Minister) to discuss matters such as the new Farming Scheme, Bird Flu and Tourism.
- The Campaign for National Parks Protector Awards at Oriel y Parc, St Davids. The event was a recognition ceremony hosted to celebrate the Roots to Recovery project, the National Park Next Generation Team and Ecodewi.



- IRONMAN Wales
- The Newport Surf Life-Saving Club where she officially declared the refurbished building open. The Chair thanked all those involved, and it was added that the Club had expressed thanks to the National Park team for their support.
- The Scouts AGM
- The memorial unveiling at St Davids Airfield on the anniversary of the Battle of Britain to remember those who lost their lives.

It was reported that the Deputy Chair, Dr R H Davies, attended the St Davids Civic Service on behalf of the Chair.

The Chair took the opportunity to pay tribute to the Chair of the Friends of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, Steve Drinkwater, who had been in post for over 7 years and was set to step down as Chair. On behalf of all Members, the Chair expressed thanks to Steve for his commitment to protecting the Park over the years. It was noted that the new Chair, Claire Dowe, was set to take over at the next AGM.

Noted.

6. Reports of meetings of various Authority Committees

The following reports of meetings of several of the Authority's Committees were presented to Members for consideration/information:

- (i) Development Management Committee held on 19 July 2023;
- (ii) Sustainable Development Fund Committee held on 26 April 2023;
- (iii) Standards Committee held on 17 May 2023;
- (iv) Operational Review Committee held on 14 June 2023;
- (v) Member Support & Development Committee held on 14 June 2023;
- (vi) Human Resources Committee held on 28 June 2023;
- (vii) Audit & Corporate Services Review Committee held on 12 July 2023;
- (viii) Youth Committee held on 25 July 2023;

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

7. Annual Report on Meeting Well-being Objectives 2022/23

The Chair welcomed Mair Thomas, the Performance and Compliance Officer, who presented the annual report that demonstrated the progress that had been made in meeting the Authority's well-being objectives. The report reflected the Authority's performance against activities noted in the Corporate and Resources Plan 2022/23 and additional developments during the year. It was noted that this was the first annual report against the Authority's new Well-being Objectives which were approved by



Members in March 2022. Members agreed that the report provided a great overview of the activities of the Authority and that it highlighted the benefits of the organisational restructure in delivering on objectives.

A Member commented that future reports could provide more focus on the '4 C's' and this was noted by the Officer. The Member also commented that the report highlighted the need for a new Welsh Language Strategy as there had been little movement in this area.

It was noted that 30 employees had left the organisation in 2022/23 vs 20 in the previous year and a Member asked why this was the case. The Chief Executive explained that the figure was linked to a range of elements such as seasonal staff and the process of change within the organisation. It was added that although recruitment has been a challenge for many organisations recently, the Authority continued to recruit good candidates.

It was reported that there were accuracy issues in terms of the commuting and homeworking figures and a Member asked for further clarification. The Officer responded that Tier 3 Methodology, as recommended by the Welsh Government, had been used to collate the data in the form of a survey however not all staff had participated and so, the data did not provide a complete picture. It was added that the data did still provide an insight into the trends of the workforce.

On the proposal of Dr M Havard, seconded by Dr R H Davies, it was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Report on Meeting Well-being Objectives 2022/23 be approved.

8. 2023 Annual Monitoring Report on the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2)

The Chair welcomed the Planning Officer, Gayle Lister, who presented the Annual Monitoring Report that looked back at the previous financial year, from 1 April to 31 March, to assess the extent to which the LDP2 strategy and policies were being achieved.

Members noted that the topic of 'Planning Applications Decided Contrary to Recommendation' was featured frequently throughout the report and gave the impression that the Authority had a high volume of these cases. It was suggested that a breakdown with a narrative be provided in the report to avoid confusion. This was noted by the Officer.

A Member suggested that more information be featured on the Welsh Language sensitive areas, and that the Welsh Language should be a more cross-cutting theme as the overall percentage of Welsh Speakers in Pembrokeshire had declined. This was noted by the Officer.



School occupancy levels were featured as part of the report, and it was highlighted by Members that Ysgol Bro Preseli and Penrhyn Church in Wales V.C School were omitted from the list and they asked if these should be added. The Strategic Policy Manager confirmed that she would discuss this with the Education Officer at Pembrokeshire County Council and make the necessary amendments before the report was finalised.

On the proposal of Councillor P Morgan, seconded by Councillor S Alderman, it was **RESOLVED** that;

- i) the representations received in Appendix B be approved.
- ii) the attached Annual Monitoring Report (see Appendix A) for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan 2 be approved for submission to the Welsh Government by the 31st of October 2023, subject to the amendments agreed at the meeting.

9. Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2): Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) Consultations

The Chair welcomed the Strategic Policy Manager, Martina Dunne, who presented a report that featured consultation responses on the draft SPG and the updated SPG document. It was reported that three guidance documents had been consulted upon, one of which was prepared jointly with the Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC). The Officer highlighted one remaining amendment that was yet to be made (details of the amendment were featured in point 45 of Appendix A in the report).

Members agreed that the responses were appropriate and it was noted that the responses received from Natural Resources Wales were helpful.

Following consideration of the report, two workshop suggestions were received from Members; the long-term impact of renewable energy on the landscape and the long-term impact of ash dieback on the landscape. The suggestions were noted by Officers.

A Member commented that the definition of Seascapes featured was unclear, and the Officer explained that it had been reproduced from Welsh Government guidance. The Officer agreed to identify whether further clarification could be provided.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Councillor P Morgan, it was **RESOLVED** that;

- i) the Officers' responses to the consultation responses received in Appendix A be agreed.
- ii) Supplementary Planning Guidance be adopted on:



- a) Seascapes subject to the edits in Appendix B (prepared jointly with Pembrokeshire County Council)
 - b) Trees and Woodlands subject to the edits in Appendix B
 - c) Loss of Hotels and Guest Houses as set out in Appendix B.
- iii) delegated authority be provided to the Strategic Policy Manager to make further minor edits to include taking account of Pembrokeshire County Council's consideration of the representations on the Joint Supplementary Planning Guidance on Seascapes. Any proposed changes by Pembrokeshire County Council which are substantive nature will be reported back to the National Park Authority for further consideration.

[The meeting was adjourned between 11:30am and 11:40am]

10. Toilet Facilities Funding Request from Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC)

The Chair welcomed Sara Morris, the Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement, who presented the report of the Members' Working Group formed in response to a formal request from PCC to the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) regarding the funding of toilet facilities across the National Park. The report detailed the issues identified by the Working Group that was set up to consider the matter and their recommendations for a response.

The report featured a range of data that was considered by the Working Group and this included a scoring system that identified which individual facilities contributed most to the National Park purposes. It was reported that PCNPA did not manage or maintain any toilets and there was no legal requirement for the Authority to respond positively to the request. It was added that the Authority already contributed around £800k towards PCC's statutory and non- statutory services.

A discussion ensued regarding the Members disappointment of the situation and the importance of public toilets to Pembrokeshire, its communities and tourism industry.

It was agreed by Members that the response should include clarification regarding timescales to avoid confusion, a condition that reviews be conducted to ensure progress and a condition that the Working Group feature both Officers and Members. It was requested that the importance of toilets to the Outdoor Schools project also be noted in the response.

In response to a query raised by a Member, the Chief Executive confirmed that the recommendation presented to PCC would be for a 2-year period only and the ownership of the toilets would remain with PCC. He added



that the Authority already made a significant funding contribution through maintenance of the County's public rights of way and that as it was unable to levy any additional money, any contribution made would need to come from either The National Park Grant or revenue generated from a range of income generation sources.

As an alternative option, a Member asked whether the Authority could support more toilet locations if they were to open for only 6 months. The Officer explained that following discussions with PCC, it was confirmed that due to the cost of water and electricity, the money saved would not be sufficient to make it a feasible option.

A Member expressed their concern regarding the Authority's partial offer due to the organisations limited resources and the possibility that it would not be accepted by PCC. It was suggested that an external communications plan be put in place should the recommendation be accepted to help manage public perception of the offer.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Councillor R Jordan, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- i) a formal offer be made to Pembrokeshire County Council to fund toilet facilities at specific locations within the National Park for a period of two years.
- ii) this offer be subject to a request for a commitment from Pembrokeshire County Council that it establish a working group consisting of representatives of the National Park (both Members and Officers), along with other relevant partners to develop a strategy to seek grant funding to improve general standards at locations around the coast and to develop an Accessible Coast project, submitting grant funded applications over this two-year period.

11. Grant Approvals in Accordance with Section 76 of the Financial Standards

The Chair welcomed the Lead Ecologist, Sarah Mellor, and the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Officer, Sue Burton, who presented a report that outlined details of the Wild Coast! Project and proposed Native Oyster Restoration programme for which Members were asked to approve a one-off payment of up to £45k to Bangor University for the rearing and restocking of indigenous native oysters to the Milford Haven Waterway.

A discussion ensued regarding the importance of blue carbon and biodiversity projects and Members were pleased to see that the project would be in partnership with a Welsh University that had expertise in the area. The Marine SAC Officer provided Members with further background of the proposed project and confirmed that they aimed to collaborate with



other organisations to share best practice and engagement events would be hosted for the public.

On the proposal of Dr M Havard, seconded by Councillor S Alderman, it was **RESOLVED** that a payment of up to £45k to Bangor University for the rearing and restocking of indigenous native oysters to the Milford Haven Waterway be approved.

12. Grant Approvals in Accordance with Section 76 of the Financial Standards

The Chair welcomed the Lead Ecologist, Sarah Mellor, who presented a report that outlined details of the Connecting the Coast Scheme which requested that grants of over £20,000 awarded through this scheme be delegated to the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Committee for approval.

A Member questioned whether the governance of the SDF Committee should be reviewed given that applications would be local and the possibility of Members having a personal interest. Reassurance was provided that the SDF Committee had the necessary experience to deal with both local and large applications, to work with Officers to ensure that a suitable amount of funding was awarded to the leading projects and that good governance was maintained throughout. The Chief Executive added that discussions were taking place to determine whether the SDF Committee should be amended to a more general Grant Awarding Panel with revised terms of reference however Members would be consulted prior to any decisions being made.

Following a discussion, it was established that no maximum had been specified for the amount that applicants could apply for through the scheme. It was therefore suggested that another trigger amount be set for larger projects that would require a counter signature for approval. This was noted by the Officer.

On the proposal of Dr R H Davies, seconded by Councillor S Alderman, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) the delegation to the Sustainable Development Fund Committee to approve grants of over £20k awarded as part of the Connecting the Coast Scheme be approved.
- b) The Terms of Reference of the Sustainable Development Fund Committee be revised following discussion with the Committee and presented to a future meeting of the Authority.



13. Replacement of an essential chiller unit at the Oriel y Parc Gallery

The Chair welcomed the Head of Finance, Richard Griffiths, who presented a report that outlined details of a replacement chiller unit that was essential to the Oriel y Parc Gallery. It was reported that the procurement of the replacement chiller was a matter of urgency as the chiller unit that controlled the vital atmospheric conditions in the gallery ceased to operate unexpectedly in early August 2023 and could not be repaired. The Authority was advised that the lead time for a replacement chiller would be 12 weeks from receipt of order and to avoid protracting the period any longer than necessary, a decision was made to suspend the normal procurement rules.

It was noted that the previous chiller unit unexpectedly failed and a Member asked whether in future, the unit should be checked on a regular basis to potentially avoid a similar situation and to ensure the appropriate procurement process could take place. The suggestion was noted by the Officer.

On the proposal of Councillor P Morgan, seconded by Dr S Hancock, it was **RESOLVED** that the use of contract standing order 16 in regard to the procurement of a new chiller unit at the Oriel y Parc Art Gallery be endorsed.

14. Variation to Contract Standing Orders for the renewal of Esri Arc GIS Online Software

The Chair welcomed the Head of Nature Recovery, Michelle Webber, who presented a report that outlined details of the Authority's job management software platform for which they were seeking renewal of the software through a variation to Contract Standing Orders. It was reported that the purchase of Esri ArcGIS Online was authorised initially in 2018 and loss of the system now would result in many years of data and the system by which work was allocated, recorded and monitored and reported being lost.

The Officer highlighted that although the report stated the quote received was for a one-year period, confirmation was required from the software provider as to whether the contract would be for a 3-year period as per the previous contract. Members agreed that in the interest of engaging with the open market, a contract of one year should be sought at present with the aim of reviewing the system alongside other potential systems after that time.

On the proposal of Dr R H Davies, seconded by Councillor D Clements, it was **RESOLVED** that a variation to standing orders to renew the subscription to the web based Esri ArcGIS Online system for the period of one year be approved.



15. Unacceptable Behaviour by Complainants Policy and revised Complaints Handling Policy

The Chair welcomed the Democratic Services Manager, Caroline Llewellyn, who presented a report that outlined a proposed Unacceptable Behaviour policy and a revised Complaints Policy. It was reported that the Unacceptable Behaviour by Complainants Policy was proposed for introduction due to the general increase of poor behaviour by a small number of people. It was confirmed that the purpose of the revised Complaints Policy was to amend the procedure from a 2-step to a more streamlined 1-step process in the interest of both complainants and Officers. The officer added that both documents would be available in Welsh.

A discussion ensued regarding the Members disappointment that a Unacceptable Behaviour by Complainants Policy was necessary however they were pleased that staff would be supported by the policy in difficult situations. It was suggested by a Member that it would be helpful to include an additional clause regarding the unacceptability of submitting vexatious complaints in the Unacceptable Behaviour by Complainants Policy to better protect staff.

On the proposal of Mrs J James, seconded by Councillor P Morgan, it was **RESOLVED** that the Unacceptable Behaviour by Complainants Policy and revised Complaints Handling Policy be adopted by the Authority subject to the above amendments.

16. Any Other Business

With regards to minutes of meetings, the Chair requested that the names of participating Officers also be recorded in the attendance section. Both Members and Officers agreed to this.

Noted.

