

National Park Authority

15 November 2023

Present (In Person)

Councillor D Clements (Chair)

Councillor S Alderman, Councillor SL Hancock, Dr M Havard, Dr R Heath-Davies, Councillor R Jordan, Councillor M Wiggins and Councillor C Williams BEM.

Present (Remotely)

Mrs S Hoss, Mrs J James, Councillor M James, Mr GA Jones, Councillor S Skyrme-Blackhall and Councillor A Wilcox.

Also in attendance:

Tegryn Jones (Chief Executive), Richard Griffiths (Head of Finance), Mike Kent (Monitoring Officer), Sara Morris (Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement), Gary Meopham (Estates Officer), Emma Thornton (Chief Executive, Visit Pembrokeshire), Daisy Hughes (Carew Castle Visitor Services Manager), Jason Blewitt (Audit Wales), Jonathan Matther (Audit Wales), Caroline Llewellyn (Democratic Services Manager) and Georgia Jones (Democratic Services Officer).

[Councillor M James joined the meeting during consideration of the Action Log and Mrs S Hoss and Mr G A Jones joined the meeting during consideration of report 38/23, Visit Pembrokeshire]

[Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock and Remotely 10.00am – 11:40pm]

1. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Morgan, Councillor R Owens, Dr RM Plummer and Councillor B Price.

2. **Disclosures of Interest**

Councillor D Clements disclosed a personal interest in report 38/23, Visit Pembrokeshire.

3. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on the 20 September 2023 and 6 October 2023 were presented for confirmation and signature.

On the proposal of Dr M Havard, seconded by Councillor S Alderman, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings held on the 20 September 2023 and 6 October 2023 be confirmed and signed.



4. Action Log

a) Cyber Security Training (ID 838)

A Member highlighted that although the action of circulating the training link had been completed, the progress section failed to mention whether all Members had completed the training. It was agreed that the action be amended to provide an update at the next meeting regarding the number of Members that had completed the training and that the training link be recirculated. A discussion ensued regarding Councillors already having completed a Cyber Security Training course for Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) and it was asked if these certificates would suffice rather than completing another similar course. The Chief Executive agreed to discuss this with the IT team to ensure the PCC course covered all necessary elements and circulate an update to Members.

b) Greater use of the Welsh Language (ID 878)

A Member requested an update on this matter and asked that the relevant action remain on the action log to ensure progress. It was confirmed that a number of simultaneous translators had been contacted for quotes and once received, Officers could then proceed.

c) Meeting to discuss Member accountability for Delivery Plans (ID 901)

An update was provided by the Chair of the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee who confirmed that she had met with the Performance & Compliance Coordinator to discuss amendments to the proposed performance monitoring framework. It was added that the revised framework had been circulated to Audit Committee Members for their comments.

d) Internal Review of the Pay & Grading Review (ID 914)

In response to a Members' query, an update on the Pay & Grading review was provided and it was explained that all documentation had been provided to the West Midland Employers Consultant and responses were expected by December 2023. The next steps were discussed which included communicating responses to staff and the opportunity for any appeals (the number of appeals would impact the timescale).

e) Landscape Training for Members (ID 916)

Members were informed that the date of the Training was yet to be confirmed. It was explained that the new Management Plan would be published in the near future, and it was hoped that the training would then be discussed in the context of this document to ensure consistency. It was agreed that the Authority's Landscape and Seascape Supplementary Planning Guidance documents would be recirculated to Members for their information.



f) Toilet Funding Response to PCC (ID 917)

The Chief Executive confirmed that the response featuring Members comments had been sent to PCC and the response had been positive. It was stated that the only suggestion from the Authority not to be accepted related to the proposed Member & Officer Working Group - PCC had responded that the Working Group would be comprised of Officers only. The Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement added that she had attended the first meeting with Officers at PCC to identify actions and she asked Members how they wished to be informed of any future updates. It was agreed that a report be brought to the National Park Authority every 6 months to update Members on the situation.

Noted.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that she had attended the following events:

- The Commemoration Service held in St Mary's Church, Tenby, for the Belgian Armed Forces that were stationed in and near Tenby during the Second World War.
- The Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools Celebration Day at Scolton Manor that was also attended by the Education Minister, Jeremy Miles. The Chair commented that it was a great opportunity to see the hard work and dedication of the Outdoor Schools Coordinator, Bryony Rees.
- The Authority Study Day at Carew Castle where she learnt about the ongoing work carried out by the team.
- The Peak District National Parks Partnership online event where she had the opportunity to discuss matters such as Amplifying Commercial Partnerships and the Evolution of the National Parks Partnership work in private finance in nature.
- The Croeso Awards, hosted by the Pembrokeshire College. It was reported that Carew Castle had been awarded two awards; the Sustainable Tourism Award and the Visitor Attraction of the Year Award. Daisy Hughes, Carew Castle Visitor Services Manager, joined the meeting to provide Members with an overview of the criteria that was considered as part of the awards and the ways in which Carew Castle fulfilled each one. The Chair expressed congratulations on behalf of all Members to the team for their hard work and dedication.
- The Remembrance Sunday Service at Haverfordwest where she laid a wreath on behalf of the Authority.

The Chair reported that Castell Henllys had been awarded the Sandford Award and a presentation on this would be made to the next meeting.



Additionally, it was reported that the SDF Committee had been recognised as a 'St Johns Ambulance Supporter of the Year'.

The Chair also took the opportunity to thank Richard Griffiths (Finance Manager), who was leaving the Authority, for his hard work and commitment over the past 18 years. The Chair, on behalf of all of the Members, wished Richard all the best for the future.

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 06/09/2023;
- (ii) Sustainable Development Fund Committee held on 13/09/2023;
- (iii) Member Support & Development Committee held on 27/09/2023;
- (iv) Human Resources Committee held on 27/09/2023;
- (v) Youth Committees held on 22/08/2023 and 12/09/2023;

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

7. Audit of Accounts

The Chair welcomed Richard Griffiths (Head of Finance), Jason Blewitt (Audit Wales) and Jonathan Matther (Audit Wales) who presented a report that summarised the main findings for the Audit of the Authority's 2022/23 accounts. The Chair confirmed that the report had already been presented to the recent Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee and discussed in depth however Members that were not present at that Committee were invited to raise any comments.

The Chair of the Audit Committee highlighted that the audit was an unqualified opinion however it had identified two substantive points which were misstatements that were above the trivial level but lower than materiality. It was added that these points had been discussed at length during the recent Audit Committee with feedback shared on both sides on how best to address these issues. It was also highlighted that as the Authority had made the decision not to correct the misstatements, the final letter of representation contained details of these. Despite the misstatements, it was confirmed that the Audit Committee were positive regarding the audit of accounts.

In response to a query raised by a Member, Jason Blewitt confirmed that a summary of all corrections made could be found in Appendix 3 of the report, with the only issues left uncorrected being the two substantive



misstatements identified. It was added that the two uncorrected misstatements were not considered to be material and would therefore not impact the Audit opinion.

It was confirmed that as a result of the larger than usual volume of errors identified, additional work had been undertaken by Audit Wales however this work was included in the annual fee.

As part of the report, the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2022/23 was also presented to Members and it was noted that the Continuous Improvement Group remained active despite not having been utilised for over a decade and it was asked whether it should be disbanded. The Chief Executive confirmed that discussions had taken place on this matter in the past and it had been concluded that the Continuous Improvement Group served as a safety net for the Authority and would provide the mechanism to deal with any issues of concern that could not be dealt with by the standard Committee structure.

A breakdown of identified governance issues was also featured in the Annual Governance Statement and a Member asked if two additional columns could be added to the table to feature a target date and an update of progress for each action. The suggestion was noted.

The Chief Executive took the opportunity to thank the Finance Team for their hard work throughout the year.

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

- a) Members accept the Audit of Accounts Report and;
- b) The Authority Statement of Accounts 2022/23 be approved.

8. Visit Pembrokeshire

The Chair welcomed Emma Thornton, Chief Executive of Visit Pembrokeshire (VP), who made a presentation regarding the work of VP over the last year. The presentation detailed the work carried out to increase membership, performance figures, targets and objectives, events hosted, the organisations new PR partner and highlights from their Destination Management Plan (DMP) for 2024-2028. Additionally, Emma presented details of their Shared Prosperity Fund project, Leadership and Advocacy considerations, relevant research and their 2024 priorities.

It was reported that following a drive on Membership, VP had successfully obtained 84 where their target had been 85. A Member asked how many Members were required for the organisation to be viable and Emma responded this was a complex matter due to the changing nature of VP. It was clarified that in its current form as a Strategic Tourism Organisation,



VP would always require an element of public funding however discussions were taking place regarding the future structure of the organisation as much depended on the funding opportunities available. Emma took the opportunity to highlight that should VP no longer receive public funding in future, the organisation would likely revert to having a focus on business support and marketing and would no longer have the capacity to coordinate a DMP or lead on strategic projects.

It was noted that VP offered a variety of Memberships, and it was suggested that an entry level Membership be offered to those who wished to be associated with the organisation but did not require the additional support package available. It was also suggested that Memberships could be offered to consumers for them to gain access to discounts across the business Members. Emma responded that they were looking to simplify the existing Membership model therefore the opportunity of offering an entry level Membership could be explored. The suggestion regarding a consumer Membership was noted however Emma explained that this could be challenging due to existing discounts offered by businesses.

A discussion ensued regarding the research featured in the presentation that looked at the volume of tourists visiting the area and one Member added that it had been reported in the Pembrokeshire 'STEAM' report of tourism figures that in 2019, 9% of visitors were from overseas, 38% of visitors were from England and 53% of visitors were from within Wales. Emma responded that work was being undertaken at VP to present Pembrokeshire to the travel trade and to encourage more overseas visitors to travel to Pembrokeshire as they generally stayed longer and were therefore considered valued tourism.

The presentation outlined VP's priorities for 2024 and Emma reassured Members that targets had been established for these and only high-level information had been provided for the presentation. Emma then provided Members with examples of targets for future objectives.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Visit Pembrokeshire presentation be noted.

9. The North Block, Llanion Park

The Chair welcomed Gary Meopham, Estates Officer, who presented a report that sought to approve a new occupational lease to the Hywel Dda University Health Board (NHS) to extend their current occupation of the North Block Building at Llanion Park.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Dr R H Davies, it was **RESOLVED** that Members approve an early surrender of the existing Natural Resources Wales lease and simultaneously grant a new lease to the NHS on the terms outlined in the report.



10. Membership of Committees

The Chair welcomed Caroline Llewellyn, the Democratic Services Manager, who presented a report that confirmed the Membership of the Authority's Investigating & Disciplinary, Grievance and Appeals Committees. A list of the suggested Membership for the three Committees could be found in the report.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, Seconded by Dr M Havard, it was **RESOLVED** that the membership of the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee, Grievance Committee and Appeals Committee be confirmed as set out in the report.

11. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Draft Annual Report 2024/25

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report that sought Members views on the consultation draft Annual Report of the IRPW and the proposed level of Members' salaries for 2024/25. It was reported that the deadline for responses to the report was the 8 December 2023. For the benefit of Members of the public, the Chair highlighted that Members did not have any input into this report or salary scales.

As part of the report, consultation questions were featured, and Members views were sought particularly in respect of question 3 (Sustainable Travel) and question 6 (Consolidation of the travel and subsistence expenses for Members). A Member commented that under question 4, the status should be marked as 'Member' and this was noted. In addition, Members agreed that a number of examples including car-sharing, the use of hybrid vehicles and a minibus for site visits and reduced travel costs due to hybrid meetings could be included under the Sustainable Travel section. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for the travel and subsistence expenses for Members be consolidated as a global figure as the Authority had a separate reporting system that displayed the expenses of each individual for clarity and transparency.

A Member raised a point regarding the tax element associated with travel expenses for Welsh Government Members and requested that this be incorporated into the consultation response.

It was highlighted that individual Members could either accept or reject the salary increases provided by the IRPW and a Member requested that an indication of the impact on the budget be provided to aid this decision. In response, the Chief Executive confirmed that a Budget Workshop was scheduled in December where this information could be provided and subsequently could then be reported to the National Park Authority in February 2024 as part of approving the budget.



It was reported that changes had been made in respect of payments to co-opted members (in the Authority's case, this applied to Independent Members of the Standards Committee). In response to a query raised by a Member, the Democratic Services Manager confirmed that there were four independent Members of the Standards Committee who met generally once a year (rather than for short periods over multiple days) and therefore, the above matter was less relevant to the Authority at present however the flexibility would be there should it be required.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Dr R H Davies, it was **RESOLVED** that the response be submitted to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' draft Annual Report, incorporating the comments made at the meeting and any additional comments Members wished to make.

