

# National Park Authority

20 December 2023

## **Present (In Person)**

Councillor D Clements (Chair)

Councillor S Alderman, Dr M Havard, Dr R Heath-Davies, Mrs S Hoss, Mr GA Jones, Councillor R Jordan, Councillor R Owens, Councillor S Skyrme-Blackhall, Councillor M Wiggins and Councillor C Williams BEM.

## **Present (Remotely)**

Councillor SL Hancock, Councillor M James, Dr RM Plummer and Councillor B Price.

## **Also in attendance:**

Owen Edwards (Visitor Services Manager North), Georgia Jones (Democratic Services Officer), Tegryn Jones (Chief Executive), Michael Kent (Monitoring Officer), Caroline Llewellyn (Democratic Services Manager), Sara Morris (Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement), Andrew Muskett (Building Projects Manager) and Michel Regelous (Management Plan and Marine Officer).

[Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock and Remotely 10.00am – 13:15pm]

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs J James, Councillor P Morgan and Councillor A Wilcox.

### **2. Disclosures of Interest**

Dr R Plummer made a general declaration as a Board Member of Natural Resources Wales and a Trustee of Plantlife however she remained in the meeting and played a full part in the discussions.

### **3. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 15 November 2023 were presented for confirmation and signature.

On the proposal of Dr R Heath-Davies, seconded by Councillor S Alderman, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 15 November 2023 be confirmed and signed.

### **4. Action Log and Matters Arising**

#### **a) Review the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) (ID 888)**

In response to a query, the Chief Executive confirmed that a report would be presented to the Audit Committee in February to allow Members to share their views on the review of the AGS.



#### b) Cyber Security Training (ID 926)

It was confirmed that Members who had completed Cyber Security Training for Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) would not be expected to complete the Authority Cyber Security Training as well. Members who had completed the PCC training were asked to send written permission to the Democratic Services Manager for her to access their PCC certificates for the Authority's records. It was asked whether the same applied to Members who had completed Welsh Government issued Cyber Security Training and the Officer agreed to investigate and report back at a future meeting. In response to a query raised, the Officer confirmed that the HR department informed her when Members had completed training.

**Noted.**

### **5. Chair's Announcements**

The Chair took the opportunity to offer condolences on behalf of all Members to both Councillor M Wiggins and Councillor SL Hancock for bereavements that they had recently experienced.

The Chair went on to report that she had attended the following events:

- A meeting with the Climate Change Minister, Julie James, to discuss, among other things, the anticipated National Park funding settlement and the visitor levy. The Chief Executive confirmed that the draft settlement had since been received and that the figure was unchanged from last year.
- The Pembrokeshire National Farmers Union (NFU) Dinner where Councillor John Davies gave a speech on the importance of local food and succession.
- The Spotlight Awards, where she had presented the Eco Champion Award. The event celebrated outstanding achievements of young people in the County.
- A Corporate Joint Committees (CJC) meeting where it was confirmed that the Authority would not be expected to provide funding in the next financial year. The agenda featured the Audit Wales report on the CJC priorities for the corporate plan 2024/25 and Welsh Language Standards.

The Chair informed Members that Castell Henllys had recently been awarded the Sandford Award for the fifth time and was recognised as one of only five sites in Wales to be awarded this accreditation for its education programme. The Chair welcomed the Visitor Services Manager for Castell Henllys, who had been invited to the meeting to provide more information to Members on the award. It was explained that the Sandford Award scheme was established in 1975 to encourage those responsible



for running historic houses to appreciate their important educational role, and to provide support and monitor standards. It was added that the award was an independently judged, quality assured assessment of education programmes at heritage sites, museums, archives and collections across the British Isles. The Officer went on to speak of the dedication of his team and his pride of working at a site that provided unforgettable experiences for visitors. Members commended the team at Castell Henllys for their hard work.

Next, the Chair spoke of the Europarc Conference that had been hosted in October 2023, in the Netherlands, and had been attended by two of the Authority's Members. The Members, Mr GA Jones and Mrs S Hoss were invited to provide a brief presentation of their experiences. The presentation featured a range of images of the conference and showcased the site visits that they had attended and the special qualities of the conference location, Leeuwarden. It was reported that the conference had marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the federation and the theme for the conference had been a "Tribute to our landscape, where nature and people meet in harmony". Mr GA Jones and Mrs S Hoss agreed that the conference had been a great opportunity for different Parks across the world to come together, share best practice and ideas and to discuss environmental matters such as the impact of the climate crisis. Both Members commented that they had a positive experience and suggested that staff be considered to attend in future as it was believed that they would benefit from the experience.

**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 25/10/2023;
- (ii) Operational Review Committee held on 27/09/2023;
- (iii) Youth Committees held on 07/11/2023;

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

## **7. National Park Management Plan Review**

The Chair welcomed the Management Plan and Marine Policy Officer, who presented a report that sought Members' input to and approval of an outline programme for review of the National Park Management Plan. It was reported that the review would include a formal consultation prior to the adoption of the final plan.



The report outlined background information of the Management Plan and an outline of the guidance for its preparation, a summary of the current plan, a breakdown of a proposed review programme, information related to Impact Assessments, details of data acquisition and management and a timeline for next steps.

Members agreed that it was imperative that the Authority adhere to the set timeline whilst ensuring stakeholders remained involved in the process as this was a plan for the Park, rather than just for the Authority.

It was highlighted by a Member that a typo could be found in the report on page 27, under point 10 where it should have read 2024 rather than 2025 and this was noted by the Officer.

A Member asked whether all of the Welsh National Park Management Plans were synchronised in their publication and in response, the Officer confirmed that at present, they were not concurrent however he acknowledged that it would be beneficial if they were in future.

It was noted that as part of an early engagement activity, an exercise would take place with the public on the topic of the special qualities of the National Park to help inform the review. A Member commented that Land, Marine and People should be well represented through this document to help establish a sense of place.

It was noted that the review of the Management Plan would be carried out in accordance with the Welsh Language Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards Regulations (No. 1) 2015. The report stated that the Authority would make a 'conscientious effort' to consider specific possible impacts of the policy on the Welsh language, via a Welsh language Assessment. In response to a query raised, it was confirmed that in the context of Welsh Language Standards, the term 'conscientious effort' had recently been recognised as a legal definition against which the Authority could be measured and so, more work was being done to explore this.

The report outlined the timeline for each step in the process and it was noted that the public consultation would take place over 12 weeks, from mid-June to mid-September. A Member asked whether a 12-week period would be necessary for the consultation based on the extensive work already carried out by the team throughout the year. In response, the Officer agreed that it may not be necessary to conduct a 12-week consultation and he confirmed that he would look into this.

It was reported that the current Management Plan guidance had initially been published in 2007 however, Natural Resources Wales were in the process of commissioning a wider review of the guidance. A Member



expressed concern regarding this and asked whether the review could have a negative effect at a time when the Authority's Management Plan was out for public consultation. In response, both the Officer and Chief Executive provided reassurances that although the guidance may be reviewed, the overall requirements would remain the same and it was believed that any changes would be positive for the Authority.

On the proposal of Dr M Havard, seconded by Dr R Plummer, it was **RESOLVED** that the proposed approach, milestones and timeline for preparation of the National Park Management Plan 2025-2029 be agreed.

## 8. Welsh Language Review & Strategy

The Chair welcomed the Democratic Services Manager, who presented a report that sought to adopt the draft Welsh Language Strategy 2023-2028 as the Authority's strategy for promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language within the National Park.

The report outlined background information of the strategy, details of the 2021 Census and details of the Welsh Language Strategy Working Group. The report also included the associated Integrated Assessment Summary for the strategy, the strategy for 2023-2028 and a review of the previous strategy for 2017-2022. Members commented that the strategy was a positive step forward in the Authority's bid to increase the use of the Welsh language and the number of Welsh speakers.

It was reported that the number of Welsh speakers at the Authority had reduced since the last review and a discussion ensued regarding the challenge of recruiting Welsh speakers. The Chief Executive confirmed that there had been an increase in the number of staff who were learning Welsh who had been supported and subsequently progressed to a level where they could work through the medium of Welsh.

It was agreed that effective monitoring would be vital to assess the impacts of the upcoming strategy and so, it was requested that an action plan be featured. The Democratic Services Manager agreed to create an action plan and would report back to the Welsh Language Strategy Working Group for its approval.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Mr GA Jones, it was **RESOLVED** that the Welsh Language Strategy 2023-2028 be adopted, with agreement of an action plan delegated to the Welsh Language Strategy Working Group.

## 9. Standards Committee Report

The Chair welcomed the Monitoring Officer, Michael Kent, who presented an annual report for 2022/23 that outlined how the Standards Committee



functions had been discharged and provided an overview of conduct matters generally within the Authority.

The report included the terms of reference of the Standards Committee, the Standards Committee Membership, a training summary, a summary of complaints, trends, details of dispensations and the annual report of the Ombudsman.

On the proposal of Councillor S Hancock, seconded by Dr RM Plummer, it was **RESOLVED** that the report of the Monitoring Officer be noted.

*[The meeting was adjourned from 11:45am to 11:55am]*

*[Councillor C Williams left the meeting before consideration of Report 45/23, Income Diversification Group]*

## **10. Income Diversification Group**

The Chair welcomed the Chief Executive who presented a report that sought agreement from Members to set up a group to guide and support the work of the Authority in relation to Income Diversification. The report explained that the Authority had focused on diversifying its income over the past decade and had managed to deal with a significant real term reduction in public funding however the scale of the challenge it now faced meant that additional work was required in this area to avoid making significant budget cuts. The Chief Executive confirmed that a workshop had recently taken place with Members and Managers where it was suggested that a group of this nature that included Members, staff and external specialists be established to support the Authority.

A Member asked whether the Group was set to be a Task & Finish Group or an ongoing Group. A discussion ensued regarding these options as well as the role of the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee in respect of oversight and accountability.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Dr M Havard, it was **RESOLVED** that;

- 1) the setting up on an Income Diversification Group be approved,
- 2) the Terms of Reference be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairs of the Authority and Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee and presented to the Group at its first meeting.
- 3) Dr RM Plummer, Councillor D Clements, Mrs S Hoss and Councillor R Owens be appointed as Members to the group with a further invitation



sent to Members by the Democratic Services Manager inviting expressions of interest for the two remaining vacancies.

#### **11. Any other business**

The Chief Executive took the opportunity to inform Members of a warning letter that the Authority had been issued by NRW in the Spring of 2023. It was explained that the letter had initially been sent directly to the relevant department however it had not been brought to the attention of the Chief Executive until recently. It was reported that the letter had been related to work that had been carried out in the Park by contractors and had allegedly resulted in the release of brown water that was potentially polluted. Having investigated the matter further, it was the opinion of the Authority that all reasonable measures had been taken at the time however due to the delay in Senior Managers being informed, the Authority did not have the opportunity to appeal.

The Chair commented that she was satisfied with the outcome of the investigation and believed that the Authority had worked swiftly with NRW to resolve the matter.

**Noted.**

#### **12. Exclusion of the public**

It was noted that in discussing the following report, information might be shared which was commercially sensitive, and it was therefore requested that the public be excluded from the meeting.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Dr M Havard, it was **RESOLVED** that the public be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, would be disclosed.

#### **13. The Redevelopment of the Green Room**

The Chair welcomed the Building Projects Manager, Andrew Muskett, who presented a report that updated Members on progress with the project since the Authority had agreed to the redevelopment of the meeting room in September 2021. The report went on to present an evaluation of tenders and costs received following the completion of the procurement phase and suggested four options for how to proceed.

A discussion ensued regarding these options, and it was agreed by Members that additional information would be required in respect of options 2, 3 and 4 for them to be able to reach a decision.

On the proposal of Councillor R Jordan, seconded by Councillor D Clements, it was **RESOLVED** that the Building Projects Manager would



collate further information based on the Members' comments and requests and present this to the NPA at its meeting in March 2024.

**Noted.**

