

Operational Review Committee

06 December 2023

Present: Councillor SL Hancock, Councillor R Jordan, Mr G A Jones, Mrs J James, Dr RM Plummer, Councillor M Wiggins and Councillor C Williams.

Also in attendance: Mitchell Hill (Volunteer Officer for Roots to Recovery and Pathways), Georgia Jones (Democratic Services Officer), Tegryn Jones (Chief Executive), Sarah Mellor (Conservation Team Leader / Lead Ecologist), Sara Morris (Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement), Graham Peake (Learning & Inclusion Team Leader), Gail Pearce (Nutrient Management Board Programme Manager), Maisie Sherratt (Youth and Inclusion and Roots to Recovery Officer), Mair Thomas (Performance and Compliance Officer), Sarah Walters (Roots to Recovery Project Officer) and Michelle Webber (Head of Nature Recovery).

[Councillor M Wiggins joined the meeting during consideration of report 09/23, Nutrient Management Boards (NMB)]

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am – 12.15pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Morgan and Councillor A Wilcox. Councillor M Wiggins had advised that she would be late.

2. Disclosures

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 27 September 2023 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

On the proposal of Councillor R Jordan, seconded by Councillor S L Hancock, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2023 be confirmed and authenticated.

4. Action Log and Matters arising

At the previous meeting, Members had agreed that it would be appropriate for a presentation on Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools be made to the Members of Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) and an update from Officers was sought on this. It was reported that the presentation had been shared with



Richard Downes, Director for Education. A Member, who also sat on the Schools and Learning Committee at PCC, agreed to discuss this with the relevant individuals to secure a date for the presentation.

Noted.

5. Nutrient Management Boards (NMB)

The Chair welcomed Gail Pearce-Taylor, NMB Programme Manager, who presented a progress report on phosphates and the work undertaken by the NMB's to improve favourable conditions status of Special Area of Conservation (SAC) catchments whilst facilitating nutrient neutral development in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (PCNP). The report provided background information, a breakdown of PCNP's duties, a progress update, current workstreams and next steps.

A Member noted the high level of collaboration required to address the excess phosphate in riverine SAC catchments and they asked how the project costs were shared between the four Authorities involved. Gail responded that the NMB's were currently funded by the Welsh Government and this funding would extend for another year and a half. Gail explained that beyond this point, the NMB's would need to look at resourcing their work through the support of local authorities and blended funding models would be explored to pull in developer and public funding, where appropriate and possible. It was added that the support that would be expected from Authorities would be proportional based on the geographical extent of the SAC catchment in each Authority's area. The Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement highlighted that although only a small area within the PCNP was impacted by the SAC catchments, it was having an impact on planning applications and was preventing some individuals from obtaining planning permission.

The report detailed a Nutrient Budget Calculator that was recognised as the only regulator supported nutrient calculator in Wales. A Member asked whether there was an opportunity to utilise this tool as a way of generating income. In response, Gail confirmed that the model used to develop the calculator was not copyrighted and therefore the NMB would not be able to limit access to generate income. She added that other income generation opportunities were being explored including a high integrity trading system for developers and, the expertise that had been gathered in West Wales presented an opportunity in itself.

It was reported that the work of the NMB's was vital in the bid to address matters such as the climate emergency and a Member requested an example of improvements that had been seen as a result of the work of the Boards. Gail responded a large portion of the work had been carried out in the Teifi Catchment area as funding was secured for a phosphate reduction and mitigation project in that area. Gail added that as part of that project, the

Board worked with farmers to address known problems that they may not have had the funding to remedy themselves such as drainage issues, installing roofs over manure stores and planting buffer vegetation alongside rivers to reduce the run-off and fencing off rivers to prevent livestock from approaching the water. On the topic of the climate emergency, Gail highlighted that the proactive targets set by the NMB's were informed by the effects of climate change as in the Summer, low flows of water were concentrating nutrients and, in the winter, heavier rainfall was causing an increased level of runoff from land.

It was noted from maps featured in the report that there were extensive phosphate failures on the Cleddau River SAC and a Member asked whether Sewage Treatment Works or development in the area had been a contributing factor to this. Gail responded that Sewage Treatment Works were issued with environmental permits that limited the amount of phosphorous that they were permitted to release in their effluent. It was added that NRW, in collaboration with Dŵr Cymru (Welsh Water), had reviewed all Treatment Works in Wales against the new targets and were issuing new permits to ensure compliance. It was reported that Dŵr Cymru had subsequently invested in their capital infrastructure to improve the functioning of the Treatment Works in relation to phosphorous. The Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement clarified that there was no clear link between development and the high levels of phosphorus in the worst affected area in Pembrokeshire and added that this location had been identified as an area for investment by Dŵr Cymru.

Noted.

[Councillor M Wiggins left the meeting during consideration of report 10/23, Pathways and Roots to Recovery Update]

6. Pathways and Roots to Recovery Update

The Chair welcomed Graham Peake (Learning & Inclusion Team Leader), Maisie Sherratt (Youth and Inclusion and Roots to Recovery Officer), Mitchell Hill (Volunteer Officer for Roots to Recovery and Pathways), and Sarah Walters (Roots to Recovery Project Officer) who presented a Roots to Recovery and Pathways update and review. The report detailed background information on both projects, the links and differences between the projects, project benefits, social media engagement, positive feedback from participants, project data and a list of partner organisations. The Officers reported a summary of the financial situation of the projects and confirmed that both were entirely funded pieces of work. The Officers explained that the funding for Pathways extended until June 2024 (it was hoped that funding would be obtained to continue the project) and Roots to Recovery was in its final year (the team were in the process of developing an appropriate subsequent project that could follow). To provide reassurance to Members, the Officer added that a number of strong applications had been submitted

for funding and the team were reasonably confident that funding would be obtained as a result.

The Officers gave a presentation that featured a range of images, portraying the nature of activities involved in the projects and case studies from individuals involved.

Members commended Officers for all that had been achieved through both projects, the benefits of which were evident. A Member asked whether Officers could provide an example of a success story brought about by either of the projects and in response, an Officer informed Members of a Mentor who as a result of personal development and the skills she gained from being involved in the Roots to Recovery project, had gone on to become a member of staff for MIND. It was added that thanks to the project, this individual progressed from not being able to introduce herself to doing presentations for groups in colleges and schools, all within the space of 18 months. Members highlighted the importance of recording these outcomes for the purposes of future funding bids. The Chair suggested that the team conduct a social return on investment analysis as this could also assist with future funding bids and this was noted by Officers.

It was noted that Roots to Recovery had hubs in South and Mid Pembrokeshire and a Member commented that in future, it would be positive to see a hub also based in the North to improve accessibility. It was confirmed that a hub in the North had been secured in Fishguard however the team had experienced difficulty in sustaining a group for the project in that area. Despite this, the team had intentions of attempting to set up a hub in the North once again in the future.

A Member asked to be informed of future events for the projects to have the opportunity to attend and meet some of those involved and this was noted by Officers. It was suggested by Members that an event of this nature could possibly be incorporated into a Members Study Day.

Finally, the Chair asked Officers what the biggest challenges were for the projects, and it was agreed that the lack of a base for wet weather activities was a challenge as inclement weather forced Officers to cancel sessions which caused great disappointment for all involved. It was added that transport was also a challenge as a number of the project participants were highly reliant on public transport and Mitchell was the only Officer who could drive the minibus as other members of the team had not completed the necessary training. The Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement took the opportunity to inform all that the lack of a wet weather base had been raised with the Asset Management Group who were now looking into this.

Noted.

[The meeting was adjourned between 11:05am and 11:15am]

7. Conservation Report 2022/23

The Chair welcomed Sarah Mellor, Conservation Team Leader and Lead Ecologist, who presented a report that set out the outcomes achieved for the PCNP through conservation work carried out during the financial year of 2022/23. The report detailed specific examples of achievements under the 'Conserving the Park' scheme, the progress made on PCNP owned sites, a report on partnership projects, progress on Authority led projects and species monitoring results.

The Officer took the opportunity to update Members on matters raised as part of the previous Conservation Report including the Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places (SLSP) funding that funded the Authority's Greening Agriculture, Traditional Boundaries and Connecting the Coast schemes. The Officer reported that all schemes had received a high level of interest and had increased the Authority's links to the local farming community. It was reported that the latest Connecting the Coast scheme had received a large volume of proposals which were now being scored and a further update would be provided at a future meeting by the relevant Conservation Officer. With regards to external funding, it was confirmed that the Conservation Team were in receipt of their highest level of funding to date and were awaiting the outcome of the Nature Networks funding bid, with news expected after Christmas.

With the Nutrient Management Boards (NMB) report in mind, the Chair asked whether the Conservation Team collaborated with other organisations such as the NMB's. The Officer confirmed that there was overlap in the work that both the Authority and NMB's carried out, particularly within the Western Cleddau area which was recognised as a key biodiversity area. It was added that an integrated approach was required by both organisations to ensure a range of actions could be carried out to address existing issues in a manner that prevents any negative consequences in future.

The Chair acknowledged the hard work of the Conservation Team and asked whether the team were working at peak capacity or whether more could still be achieved. The Officer confirmed that the team were currently working with approximately 9.5% of land managers in the county however it was believed that more could be achieved due to the SLSP funding received in the past year. Despite this, the Officer acknowledged that the work of the team was highly dependent on external funding and a level of uncertainty remained regarding the long-term impact on existing schemes, should external funding not be available. The Officer explained that the team were in the process of looking ahead to when existing funding came to an end in order to

understand what could be maintained should funding not be available and what other funding could be sourced to continue their good work.

In response to a query raised, it was confirmed that the Authority possessed a range of evidence from the Conserving the Park scheme of referrals from landowners to other eligible landowners and it was clear that this had helped with the exposure of the scheme.

The Chair proposed an idea of a training and/or recognition scheme for builders and roofers to raise awareness of wildlife and to encourage good practice in relation to conservation. This was noted by the Officer who confirmed that she would present the idea to the local Nature Partnership Network who had developed a range of joint resources of this nature.

Noted.

[Councillor C Williams left the meeting during consideration of report 12/23, Performance Report]

8. Performance Report for the Period ending 30 September 2023

The report followed the structure of the Corporate and Resources Plan for 2022/23 and presented the performance to date up to 30 September 2023. It included Quarter 2 statistics for some measures and highlighted areas where targets were in red or amber or where positive progress had been made.

The Officer reported on key areas and themes which included Delivery Plans, Conservation, Climate, Connection, Communities, Planning Performance and Corporate Areas of Change. The Officer highlighted the enforcement figures and explained that 'the average time taken to investigate' and 'time taken to take enforcement action' measures had been affected by the closure of a significant number of South cases in Q2. The Officer clarified that some cases that should have been closed but remained open on the system were identified and closed in Q2 which subsequently impacted the measures. It was reported that Managers were reviewing processes with staff to prevent this in future and following the recruitment of two additional staff, the team had more support.

Under the key theme of Climate, it was reported that a Pembrokeshire Traffic and Parking Survey had been launched in July as part of a Sustainable Transport Study and a Member asked what was being surveyed as part of this. In response, the Officer confirmed that the survey looked at elements such as recreational management and hotspots and was now at the stage of reviewing the results. The Officer commented that a presentation on these results would be given to the Committee in future.

The report detailed the SLSP funded E-Bike scheme which was due for a 'soft launch' in October 2023 and a Member asked for more details regarding



the launch and the scale of the scheme. The Chief Executive confirmed that the scheme involved approximately 6 bikes and the soft launch took place at Oriel y Parc, where members of the public could hire a bike on the day. It was added that the Authority may organise a larger launch in Spring 2024 however the purpose of the 'soft launch' was to trial the scheme to resolve any potential issues before the arrival of the busy season.

Under the key theme of 'Communities', it was reported that the Celtic Routes initiative had ended in July 2023 and a Member asked whether the Authority had any plans to continue this. The Chief Executive confirmed that the initiative came to an end as it had been funded by European funding that was no longer available. In response, the Member contemplated whether other funding could have been sought to continue the initiative and the Chair commented that it was possible for the Authority to improve the way in which it communicated the outcomes of initiatives such as Celtic Routes.

The report detailed a lack of Welsh speaking staff based at Castell Henllys and commented that there was a need to improve this. A Member asked whether the Authority had a plan on how to achieve this and the Chief Executive confirmed that this would be done through either recruitment or upskilling existing staff.

Further to a conversation held at the last meeting, a Member requested confirmation of the cost implications of the Welsh Language standards on Coast to Coast and whether adverts would also need to appear bilingually. In response, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Welsh language standards did not apply to advertisement, therefore these would remain in English only. It was clarified that the Authority aimed to maintain the same level of advertisement as past editions and so the main content would be the element impacted by these changes. It was added that the overall cost implication was unclear as there were a number of factors that could impact the advertisement revenue for the 2024 edition including the cost-of-living crisis.

It was reported that the Authority's new Health & Wellbeing Officer was now in post and a Member requested that they be invited to attend a future Operational Review Committee meeting to present an update to Members on their area of work. This was noted by Officers.

The Chair of the Human Resources Committee highlighted that the sickness absence data featured in the performance report was presented in a different form to the data featured in the HR report and there was concern that this could cause confusion. The Member confirmed that they would liaise with the Authority's HR Manager in the bid to establish the best way for these statistics to be presented for the purpose of benchmarking.

It was noted that figures for Member Training had a red RAG rating and a Member queried whether Member Workshops were featured in the figure as



she was concerned that figures for this measure were underreported. The matter would be raised at the forthcoming Member Support and Development Committee.

It was reported that work related to a LIDAR Survey (that had previously been reported as delayed) had been completed with the dataset having been processed by an external specialist. A Member asked where this information could be found and whether it was available for all to view. The Officer confirmed that she would request a brief update from the Community Archaeologist with regards to where the information was stored.

The report confirmed that the installation of EV charging had been completed and the system was now fully operational. It was confirmed that further information related to the usage and impact would be reported at a future meeting.

The report provided a brief update on the implementation of Microsoft 365 in terms of the new Parcnet and it was noted that training for the IT team had been put on hold due to resource pressures. A Member asked whether this capacity issue could lead to an area of risk for the Authority and the Chief Executive responded that despite IT being a challenging area for the Authority, the team had adapted well to the circumstances. It was added that the team were going through a process of risk assessing which informed their action plan to manage the risk.

It was noted that Officers were exploring alternative procurement methods to progress the redevelopment of the Green Room following two previous unsuccessful efforts to appoint contractors. The Chair sought an update on the matter and the Chief Executive confirmed that a report would be presented to the upcoming National Park Authority which would outline the latest update to all Members.

Noted.