

Report of the Head of Finance & Fundraising

Subject: Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

The Authority is required to produce a Governance Statement on an annual basis. The Statement provides an overview of the Authority's governance arrangements including a consideration of where governance processes and issues need improving. This provides transparency and gives assurance that the Authority is committed to continuously improve the way in which it functions.

Following feedback from the Members, a new style format has been produced, a draft of which is attached.

Members are invited to contribute to and shape the contents & format of the draft 2023/24 statement.

The final Annual Governance Statement when agreed by the Authority, will be published with the Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Recommendation: Members are asked to COMMENT & FEEDBACK on this draft report.

*(For further information, please contact Catrin Evans, extension 4900
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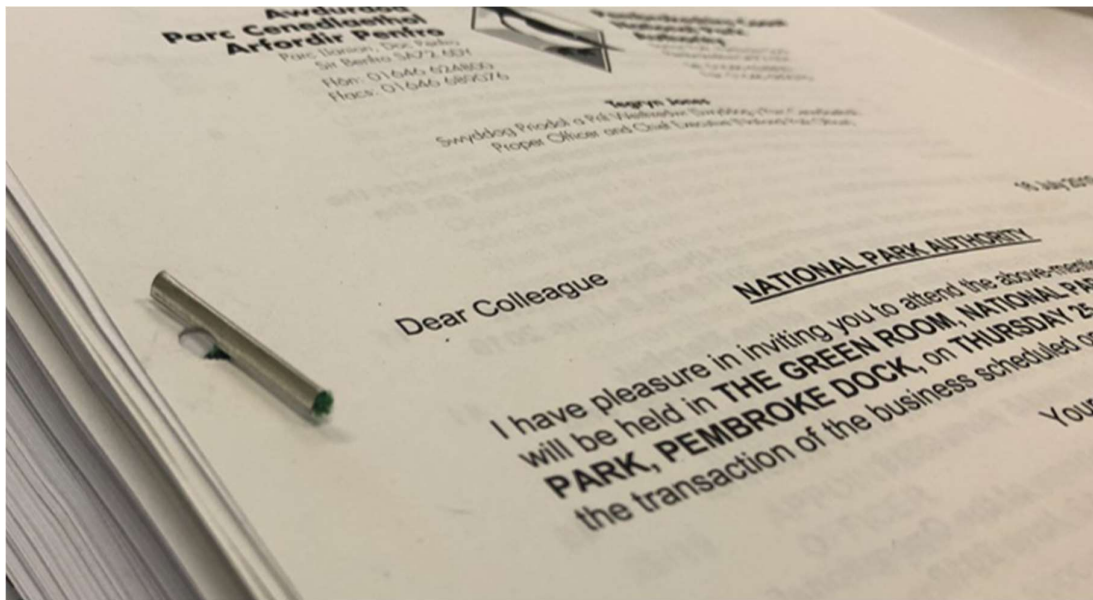
Parc Cenedlaethol
Arfordir Penfro
Pembrokeshire Coast
National Park

**PEMBROKESHIRE
COAST NATIONAL
PARK AUTHORITY**

**ANNUAL
GOVERNANCE
STATEMENT 2023-2024**

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park as a public body, was designated in 1952 following the implementation of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The beautiful area of Pembrokeshire was identified as needing special care to conserve it for future generations and, as a result of the Environment Act 1995, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (“the Authority”) was created in 1996.

1.2 In managing the National Park, the Authority has two statutory purposes:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park, and
- to promote opportunities for public enjoyment and understanding of its special qualities.

In pursuing these two purposes, the Authority also has a duty to foster the economic and social well-being of communities living within the Park.

1.3 This statement provides an overview of how the Authority’s governance arrangements operate, including how they are reviewed annually to ensure they remain effective. A summary of significant governance challenges which the Authority faces is also given, alongside an explanation of what actions have been taken to bring about required improvements, and what work is still to be done. This provides transparency and gives assurance that the Authority is committed to continuously improve the way in which it functions. More detail on topics can be accessed by clicking on the hyperlinks, which are highlighted and underlined throughout the document.

1.4 In addition, the Authority as a public body, is subject to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Under this Act, as part of its governance arrangements, the Authority is required to set and publish well-being objectives, take all reasonable steps to meet those objectives and act in accordance with the sustainable development principles. The Well-being of Future Generations Act requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

1.5 The Authority’s Well-being Objectives are as follows and align with the Authority’s high-level priorities:

High Level Priorities	Impact	Authority's Well-being Objectives
Conservation: Boosting biodiversity and halting its decline	Nature is Flourishing	Conservation: To deliver nature recovery and connectivity at scale, so nature is flourishing in the Park, contributing to the protection of 30% of our land and seas for nature by 2030
Climate: Destination Net Zero	We're an Authority aiming for net zero and a carbon neutral National Park	Climate: To achieve a carbon neutral Authority by 2030 and support the Park to achieve carbon neutrality and adapt to the impact of climate change.
Connection: Natural Health Service	People are healthier, happier and more connected to nature and heritage	Connection: To create a Park that is a natural health service that supports people to be healthier, happier and more connected to the landscape, nature and heritage.
Communities: Vibrant Communities	Places people can live, work and enjoy	Communities: To create vibrant, sustainable and prosperous communities in the Park that are placed people can live, work and enjoy.

2 Scope of Responsibility

2.1 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (“the Authority”) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. It is also responsible for ensuring that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. The Authority has a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised.

2.2 In discharging these responsibilities, the Authority must put in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk and adequate, effective financial management. The Authority has a Code of Corporate Governance which follows the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA)/Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (UK) (SOLACE) Framework ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Guidance

for Welsh Authorities 2016'. The Code sets out how the Authority operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable.

2.3 The Code of Corporate Governance is reviewed every three years to ensure it remains consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (CIPFA/SOLACE) joint framework for delivering good governance in local government.

2.4 This statement explains how the Authority has complied with the code and meets the requirements of regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2005 in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control and the issue of an Annual Governance Statement. In preparation of the Statement, the Authority reviews and adopts any additional guidance as issued, this includes CIPFA's Financial Management Code (2019) and the Financial Management Standards.

2.5 The core principles underpinning the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework are set out below and the following pages detail how the Authority is meeting these principles and governance arrangements.



3. What are the Authority's Key Governance Arrangements

3.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled, and through which it is accountable to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those

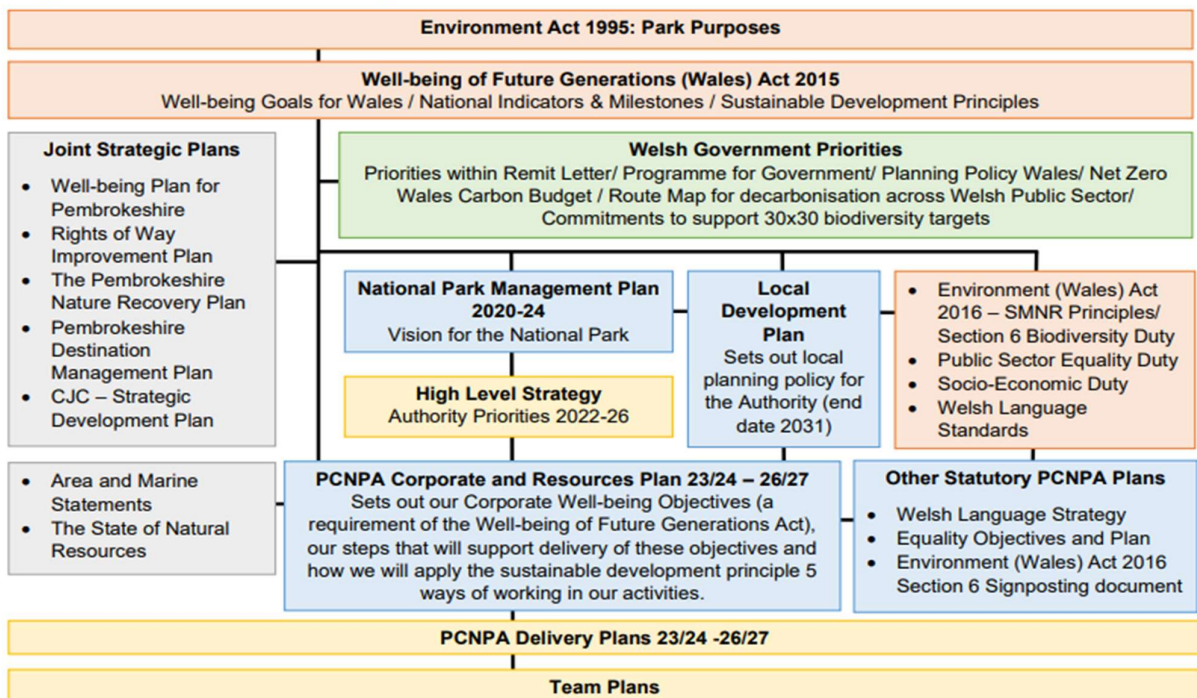
objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services. The Authority's strategic objectives are set out in the following:

- a. National Park Management Plan
- b. Local Development Plan 2
- c. Wellbeing objectives
- d. Corporate & Resources Plan
- e. Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives
- f. Welsh Language Promotion Strategy

The objectives in the Plans are underpinned by our vision of:

A National Park where nature, culture and communities thrive.

Diagram of our Plans and Statutory Duties



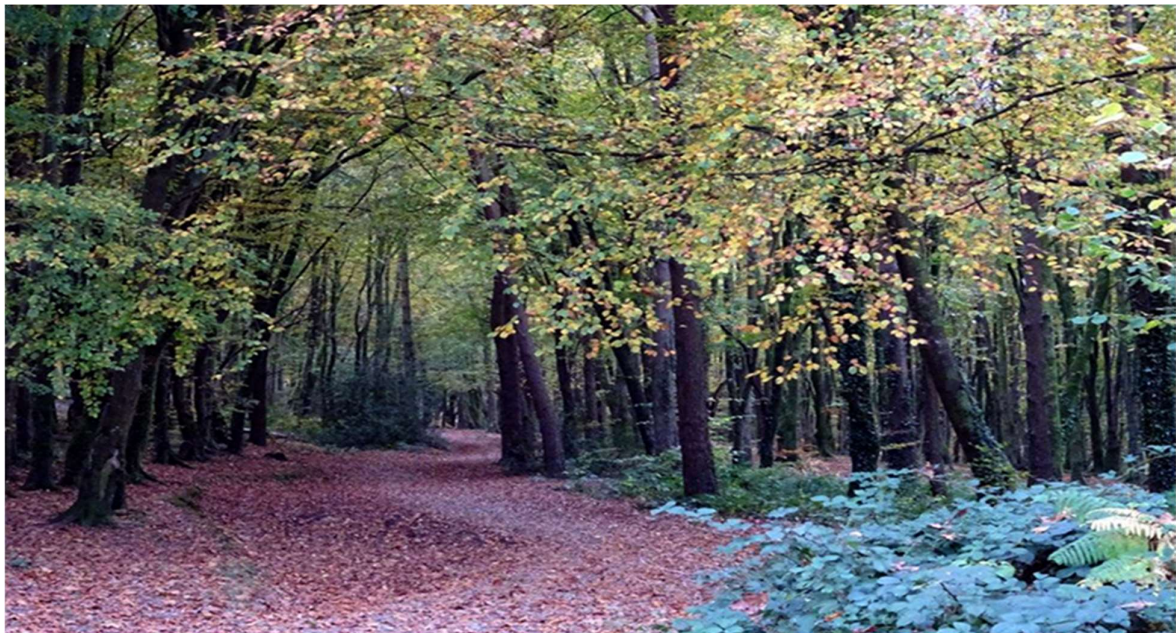
3.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve the Authority's aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control identifies and prioritises risks; evaluates the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised; and aims to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

3.3 The Authority's governance structure comprises:

- a. The National Park Authority, together with a committee structure of 10 committees which monitor the effectiveness of risk management arrangements, review governance arrangements, review internal and external audit strategies,

plans and reports and annual statement of accounts. The Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee has a key role to play.

- b. A senior leadership team who provides leadership on governance and provides clear direction to the staff and management team.
- c. A management team made up of senior managers and heads of services who provide governance, strategic management and decision-making on relevant issues within delegated powers.
- d. Information from various sources to inform governance arrangements.



a) Committee structure

1. National Park Authority (NPA)

- Provides the strategic leadership, political interface and governance framework. Responsible for strategic plans and policies and monitors achievement of those plans and arrangements.

2. Standards Committee

- Promotes high standards of ethical conduct, advising on the Code of Corporate Conduct and Conduct for Members.

3. Audit & Corporate Services Review Committee

- Provides review of effectiveness of the governance, risk management and internal control framework and oversees financial reporting.

4. Operational Review Committee

- Monitors the performance of the Authority and makes recommendations on its key policies and plans including strategic plans, development management, countryside & community vision.

5. Development Management Committee

- Responsible for the statutory planning functions, determination of applications, appeals and enforcement matters including safeguarding the landscape.

6. Member Support & Development Committee

- Oversee the support and development of Authority members including induction, training and making recommendations to the NPA.

7. HR Committee

- Reviews and makes recommendations on HR policies. Overview of staff recruitment, remuneration and development.

8. Grants Committee

- Responsible for advising and approving grant awards relating to sustainable development and other Grants awarded by the Authority which require the agreement of Members.

9. Investigating & Disciplinary Committee

- This considers and determines matters relating to the investigation and disciplinary of senior officers.

10 Grievance Committee

- Considers and determines matters raised from grievances by staff.

11 Appeals Committee

- Considers and determines matters relating to dismissals.

12 Continuous Improvement Group

- This group meets as and when required to review any aspects of the work programme and make recommendations.

b) Senior Leadership Team

Responsibility for governance and internal control lies with the Chief Executive and Directors who meet fortnightly to steer the organisation's activities. The SLT provide leadership on governance, contribute to the completion and review of the Annual Governance Statement and provide direction to the management team and staff.

c) Management Team

A Management Team made up of senior managers and heads of services meet fortnightly supporting the Authority to work efficiently and effectively. It ensures resources are allocated effectively and in line with corporate objectives and delivery plans. Discusses performance issues, risk management and governance matters.

d) Evidence sources to monitor effectiveness.

To monitor its effectiveness, the Authority considers evidence from the following sources. These include reports on performance monitoring, risk management, financial and operational matters and inform governance arrangements:

Function:	
Internal audit	The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and governance arrangements is informed by the work of the Internal Auditors and their reporting to the Authority. This work is undertaken by an external body. The terms of reference for internal audit require that work is conducted in accordance with standards as set out in the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government. The internal auditors provide an audit opinion which is reported to the Authority.
National Park Officer	The Authority appoints a National Park Officer in accordance with the requirements of the Environment Act (1995) Schedule 7 clause 14 Environment Act 1995 (legislation.gov.uk)
Section 151 Officer	The Authority engages an external Section 151 Officer. The role and responsibilities of the Section 151 Officer are detailed in the Local Government Act 1972 (legislation.gov.uk) . The Authority also complies with the CIPFA "Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government".
Monitoring Officer	The Authority employs an independent Monitoring Officer under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to report on the Authority's conduct and standards function.

Data Protection Officer	The Authority engages an external Data Protection Officer, a requirement for Public Bodies under the UK GDPR. The Data Protection Officer assists the Authority to monitor internal compliance, inform and advise on data protection obligations, support completion of Data Protection Impact Assessments and act as a contact point for data subjects and the Information Commissioner's Office.
External Auditors	Audit Wales act as the Authority's external auditors and comment on the financial accounts and performance in the annual audit letter. The Auditor General for Wales also carries out examinations to assess the extent to which the Authority has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.
External Regulators	The Authority can be subject to review and investigation by external regulators which include the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner, Welsh Language Commissioner, Information Commissioner, Health and Safety Executive, Equality and Human Rights Commission and Public Services Ombudsman Wales.

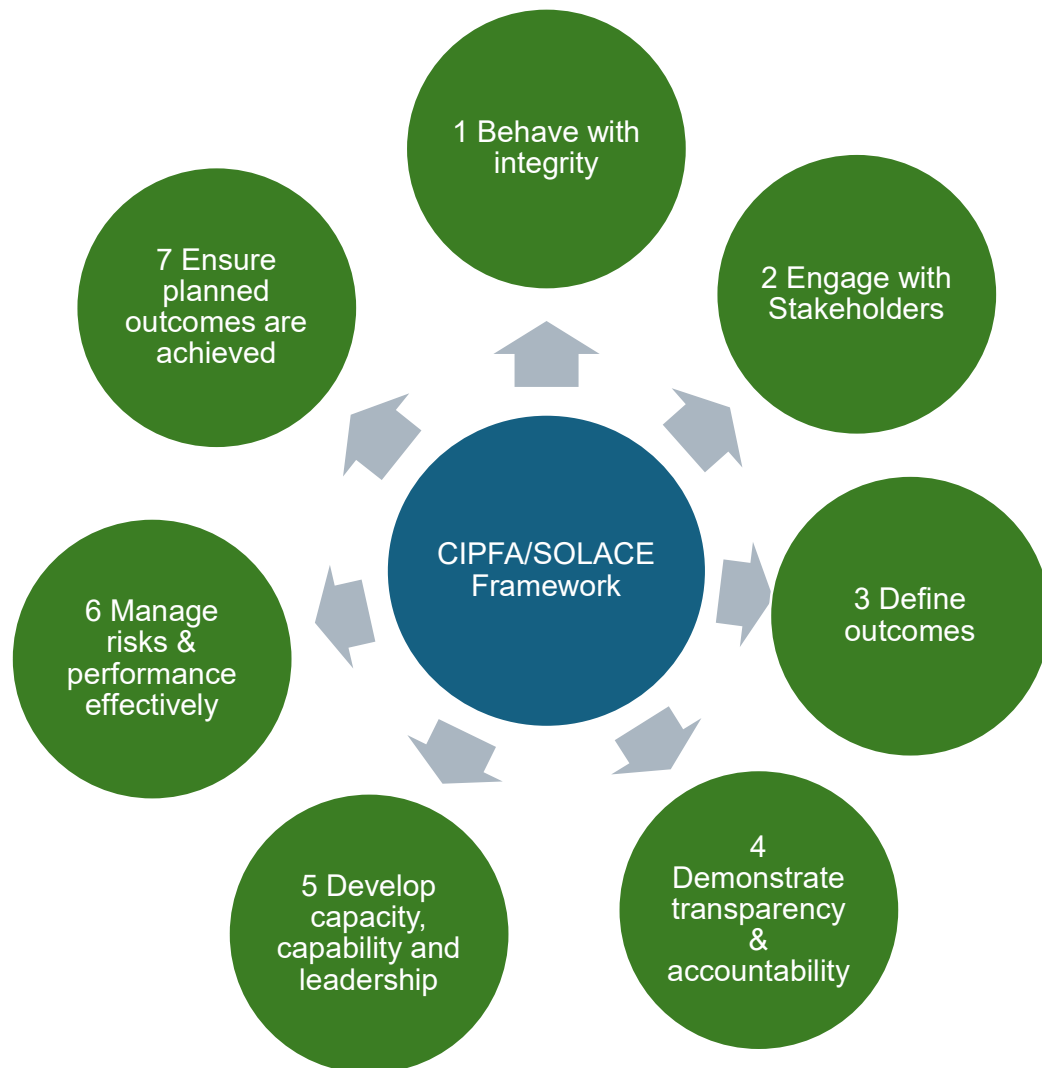
The Authority also considers the following evidence sources to monitor effectiveness and recommend improvements:

- Employee & Youth forums
- Customer feedback & complaints
- Consultations & project evaluations
- Anti-Fraud & Corruption, Whistleblowing & Safeguarding
- Expert advice & guidance
- Partnership plans & strategies



4. What are the Authority's Core Principles of Good Governance

The review of the effectiveness of the Authority systems of governance is undertaken in accordance with the following 7 CIPFA principles. The Authority is committed to delivering these principles and aims to demonstrate robust governance across reporting, monitoring, scrutiny and decision making across the organisation:



5. How the Authority Demonstrates its Core Principles of Good Governance

Principal 1: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law.

The Park's Commitment to Good Governance	How the Park demonstrates these principles
Behaving with Integrity	<p>The Authority has in place statutory plans and objectives that provide a framework to inform and guide its work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Park Management Plan 2020-24. During 2023/24 the Authority began the process of reviewing the current National Park Management Plan including holding workshops with Members and initiating a public consultation on the Park's Special Qualities. • Local Development Plan 2 • Corporate and Resources Plan and Well-being Objectives • Equality Plan and Objectives. During 2023/24 the Authority initiated work to review its Plan and Objectives. • Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. During 2023/24 the Authority approved a new Welsh Language Strategy. • Section 6 Biodiversity Signposting document <p>The Authority has in place the following documents that provide a framework to guide decision making and Officer and Member behaviour:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Orders • Members Code of Conduct • Members Planning Code of Conduct • Code of Corporate Governance • Financial Standards • Standing Orders relating to Contracting Procedures

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy • Employee Code of Conduct <p>The Authority is committed to providing a high standard of service however recognises that at times things go wrong and that lessons are learnt from mistakes. It has in place the following to support the public and staff to raise any concerns or complaints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints Handling Policy. A revised policy was approved by the National Park Authority on the 20/9/23. • Whistleblowing Policy
<p>Demonstrating Strong Commitment to Ethical Values</p>	<p>The Standards Committee champion high standards of ethical governance from elected members and the Authority as a whole.</p> <p>The Authority has the Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development. A programme of training and workshop sessions are delivered during the year to Members. In 2023/24 Members also participated in training sessions delivered by Welsh Government on Nature and Climate Emergency, Governance and Diversity and Inclusion.</p> <p>The Authority hosts the Inclusion, Diversity and Governance Excellence Strategic Lead for Welsh National Parks and Areas of Outstanding National Beauty. The Strategic Advisor has an action plan and implementation of this plan will have a positive impact on Authority’s governance, diversity and inclusion activities (including implementation of the Public Sector Equality Duties and Welsh Specific Duties.)</p> <p>The Authority has in place Equal Opportunities, Welsh Language, Environmental, Sustainable Procurement and Safeguarding policies to help promote and implement ethical values in its work:</p> <p>The Authority has developed mechanisms to support it to embed a range of public sector related duties in practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each of the Authority’s Delivery Plans set out how they will be implemented to support cross cutting outcomes. • Integrated Assessment Process which informs both plan development and decision making • Staff are required to complete safeguarding and equality training.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Section 6 Biodiversity duty has informed priority action within our Nature Recovery Delivery Plan – “Nature Recovery informing how we operate: Embedding nature recovery in how we operate with focus on access and heritage.” • Initiating work on development of Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy
Respecting the Rule of Law	<p>The Authority employs a monitoring officer to ensure that Authority decisions are taken in a lawful and fair manner, that correct procedures are followed and that all applicable laws and regulations are complied with. Where necessary, legal advice is sought to inform decision making.</p> <p>The Authority engages a S151 officer who has statutory reporting duties in respect of unlawful and financially imprudent decision making.</p> <p>The Authority ensures that it complies with CIPFA’s Statement on the Role of the Chief Finance Officer in Local Government (2016).</p> <p>Key policies are in place to prevent and minimise the risk of fraud and include Whistleblowing, Anti-Fraud & Bribery and Money Laundering Policies.</p> <p>The Authority has financial regulations and contract procedure rules in place to help prevent and investigate any irregularity.</p> <p>Key policies are in place to minimise risks in compliance areas such as health and safety, safeguarding, cyber security, data protection, equality, sustainability and Welsh language standards. Staff are also required to complete training across compliance areas.</p>



Principal 2: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

The Park's Commitment to Good Governance	How the Park demonstrates these principles
Ensuring openness	<p>Authority and Committee meetings are held in public and live-streamed online (other than in limited circumstances where consideration of confidential or exempt information means that the public are excluded), with agenda, reports and confirmed minutes available on the Authority's website. This includes performance reports that are provided to the Operational Review Committee and Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee. Annual Reports are published on the Authority's website.</p> <p>The Authority provides responses to Freedom of Information, Environmental Information and Subject Access requests and has in place a publication scheme.</p> <p>The Authority's website provides information about the Authority's plans, activities and meetings. The Authority issues regular press releases raising awareness of activities and their impact, with information shared across social media. The Authority distributes Coast to Coast to support wider engagement and understanding of the Park. Officers regularly attend community events and carry out outreach activities.</p> <p>The Authority submits quarterly planning performance statistics to the Welsh Government for benchmarking purposes against other Local Authorities. This information is published on the Welsh Government's website.</p> <p>The Authority conducts evaluation activities for externally funded projects.</p> <p>The commitment to openness is also shown through staff and volunteer engagement and information sharing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Representative Forum • Internal communications such as the monthly staff newsletter

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Meetings, where staff are given an opportunity to engage with and ask questions to senior managers. • Minutes from Management Team meetings, Health and Safety Group and Asset Management Group are published on the staff intranet.
<p>Comprehensive Stakeholder & Community Engagement</p>	<p>The Authority seeks to engage with local people and stakeholders through a range of consultations. Stakeholders are invited contribute views prior to developing and implementing key changes. Examples from 2023/24 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Authority has begun a consultation with residents, visitors, organisations and other stakeholders on a new National Park Plan for 2025. • Between 23/10/2023 and 20/11/2023, the Authority also ran an online public consultation regarding the future of Traeth Mawr. • Between February 2023 and May 2023 the Authority consulted on the following supplementary planning guidance: Seascapes (joint guidance with Pembrokeshire County Council), Trees and Woodland and Loss of Hotels and Guest Houses. • Beach Wheelchair Survey <p>The Authority has in place a volunteer forum and Youth Committee. The Youth Committee have developed the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Next Generation Youth Manifesto. Through their mural project young people involved in Youth Committee and wider next generation activities have been engaging with wider young people about the National Park and challenges it faces, including climate change.</p> <p>The Authority's Roots to Recovery project with MIND Pembrokeshire which focuses on the restorative powers of Pembrokeshire's amazing outdoors is an example of a participant led project, where beneficiaries of the project play a central role in shaping what the project delivers.</p> <p>The Authority works with a number of third parties and external bodies to develop plans and deliver cohesive services. These include and not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Government • Pembrokeshire County Council • Carmarthenshire County Council

- UK National Parks & National Parks Wales
- Local Access Forum
- Tirweddau Cymru/ Landscape Wales
- Pembrokeshire Public Service Board
- Visit Pembrokeshire
- Town & Community Councils
- Third sector organisations such as Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum

The Authority enters into partnership agreements to deliver projects and outcomes and works cooperatively to deliver those outcomes.



A National Park where nature, culture and communities thrive.

Principal 3. Defining outcomes in terms, of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

The Park's Commitment to Good Governance	How the Park demonstrates these principles
Defining outcomes	<p>Authority outcomes are defined by the following strategic plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Park Management Plan 2020-24. During 2023/24 the Authority began the process of reviewing the current National Park Management Plan including holding workshops with Members and initiating a public consultation on the Park's Special Qualities. • Local Development Plan 2 • Authority high level strategy • Corporate and Resources Plan and Well-being Objectives • Equality Plan and Objectives. During 2023/24 the Authority initiated work to review its Plan and Objectives. • Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. During 2023/24 the Authority approved a new Welsh Language Strategy. • Section 6 Biodiversity Signposting document <p>These outcomes are informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership Plans such as the Pembrokeshire Well-being Plan, Pembrokeshire Nature Recovery Plan, Rights of Way Improvement Plan and Pembrokeshire Destination Management Plan • Welsh Government term of government remit letter for the National Park Authorities • Welsh Government Biodiversity Deep Dive and decarbonisation related strategies • Welsh Government related Equality Plans • National Milestones and Indicators for Wales • Planning Policy Wales • South West Wales Area Statement, Marine Area Statement and State of Natural Resources for Wales report

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of new duties – Socio Economic Duty under Equality Act, Socially Responsible Procurement Duty <p>Progress against Outcomes are measured through annual reports, impact case studies, performance reports and other supplementary reports provided to relevant Committees.</p>
Sustainable economic, social & environmental benefits	<p>Both the National Park Management Plan and Local Development Plan 2 were subject to sustainability appraisals.</p> <p>The Authority uses integrated assessments, a multi-purpose tool to identify and inform decision making.</p> <p>The Authority’s operational activities are informed by its Well-being Objectives set out in the Corporate and Resources Plan. The Well-being Objectives and steps to implement them support the Authority to meet the sustainable development principles under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long Term: The world is facing a nature and climate emergency, lack of action now will have long term consequences for future generations and the Park. Supporting action to address these challenges is at the heart of our Well-being Objectives. • Prevention: All our Well-being Objectives are focused on delivering interventions that will look to prevent problems occurring or getting worse across the National Park Area. • Integration: Our Well-being Objectives can only be achieved by taking a strategic and integrated approach with partners. Our delivery plans support an integrated approach maximising cross cutting impacts across our Well-being Objectives. • Collaboration: We have placed collaboration at the heart of all our Well-being Objectives and delivery plans. From experience we know that positive change can only be achieved through working together with others. • Involvement: Our Well-being Objectives can only be achieved by proactively involving and listening to people. Engagement will be used to ensure we develop the right interventions to break down barriers to support a more diverse range of people to take action for nature or experience the outdoors and wonders of the Park.

Authority has in place an Equality Plan and Objective, Welsh Language Strategy and a Section 6 Biodiversity Signposting document.

The Authority through its annual budget process ensures that financial resources are directed to the Authorities priorities and help develop a 3–5-year medium term plan.

Authority has Member representation on the [Corporate Joint Committee for South West Wales](#). The Committee will improve the regional planning, co-ordination and delivery of transport, land use planning, economic development and energy.



Principal 4: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

The Park's Commitment to Good Governance	How the Park demonstrates these principles
Determining & planning interventions	<p>The Authority's strategies are informed by consultations and a range of assessments.</p> <p>The Authority has in place an integrated assessment process, which helps identify positive and negative impacts and where mitigating actions are needed.</p> <p>A performance reporting management system to monitor performance is in place which highlights progress and achievement against deliverables. The system has a dashboard function to provide quick visual overview of performance in different areas. Performance information is reported to Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee and Operational Review Committee for Members to consider.</p> <p>The Authority's Risk Management Policy sets out the process to identify and control areas of uncertainty which may impact on the achievement of outcomes.</p> <p>Budget workshops are held with Members to discuss annual and medium-term financial planning. The budget planning process ensures budgets are prepared in accordance with objectives and strategies. Financial performance is reported regularly to the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee.</p> <p>The Authority completes Data Protection Impact Assessments to help identify and minimise the data protection risks of projects and activities.</p> <p>Monitoring of incidents, workforce and budgets through the governance structures ensures that issues are identified and appropriate interventions agreed.</p>

	<p>The Authority carries out surveys of the effectiveness of its service delivery through customer satisfaction surveys, performance against quality standards and by monitoring formal complaints.</p> <p>The Senior Leadership Team provides governance, strategic management and decision-making on relevant issues and within delegated powers. It receives minutes and decides upon recommendations/ issues referred to it by Health and Safety Group, Asset Management Group, Staff Representative Group, Retail Group and Safeguarding Group.</p>
<p>Optimising achievement of intended outcomes</p>	<p>The Authority integrates and balances priorities, affordability and other resource constraints through the budget setting process. This helps identify the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term, including both revenue and capital spend budgets and the resources needed. This includes a medium-term financial plan.</p> <p>The Authority has in place delivery plans 2023/24-26/27 which set out priority actions and deliverables, guided by its high-level strategy, Well-being Objectives and budgetary constraints. These plans are reviewed annually to assess whether any changes are needed to the deliverables in advance of the new financial year.</p>



Principal 5: Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and individuals within it.

The Park’s Commitment to Good Governance	How the Park demonstrates these principles
Developing the organisation’s capacity	<p>During 2022-23 the Authority undertook a process of restructuring to increase leadership capacity and identify clear lines of accountability. The Authority has been working on embedding this new structure during the year.</p> <p>The Authority has a Health and Safety Project Officer to help develop and strengthen the Authority’s approach to Health and Safety.</p> <p>The Authority hosts the Inclusion, Diversity and Governance Excellence Strategic Lead for Welsh National Parks and Areas of Outstanding National Beauty. This role provides additional support to the Authority in areas of inclusion and governance.</p>
Developing the capability of the Organisation’s leadership & other individuals	<p>Members receive a full programme of induction to introduce the remit of the National Park Authorities and how they operate within the Governance of Wales.</p> <p>Member Support and Development Committee meet on a quarterly basis. The Authority ensures that all barriers to training are removed to encourage inclusivity. The committee reviews progress against the training plan which is updated annually. The Authority has the Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development. A programme of training and workshop sessions are delivered during the year to Members. In 2023/24 Members also participated in training sessions delivered by Welsh Government on Nature and Climate Emergency, Governance and Diversity and Inclusion.</p> <p>Mandatory online training in in place for staff on data protection, health & safety, cyber security, equality and safeguarding. During 2023/24 a programme of IOSH Managing Safely courses has been delivered to staff.</p>

Other learning and development needs are identified through the annual performance review cycle. This informs the organisational development plan and individual training needs.

Professional Development Programmes are utilised through Pembrokeshire County Council and Academy Wales.

Staff who are members of professional bodies are required to undertake relevant continual professional development.

The Authority is committed to promoting the physical, mental health and wellbeing of the workforce. This is achieved through an employee assistance programme, HR policies, availability of flexible and hybrid working as well as referral to occupational health and other health benefits. During the year the Authority hosted a Well-being-day for staff.



A National Park where nature, culture and communities thrive.

Principal 6: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.

The Park's Commitment to Good Governance	How the Park demonstrates these principles
Managing risk	<p>The Authority operates a risk management framework that aids decision making in pursuit of the organisation's strategic objectives, protects the Authority's reputation and other assets and is compliant with statutory and regulatory obligations. The Corporate Risk Register is part of this framework and summarises the key risks. It is used to inform decision making, provide assurance over actions being taken to manage key risks and to inform management planning and mitigation activities. Named risk managers are identified in the Register for its key strategic risks.</p> <p>During the year the Authority reviewed its approach to risk with the development of a new risk management policy, this will inform the development of a new risk register template for future monitoring. Officers are working with Members to set the Authority's risk register.</p> <p>Key registers are in place to record members' and officer's personal and business interests as well as a register of gifts and hospitality. These aim to avoid issues of conflict of interests in conducting Authority affairs.</p> <p>Business continuity arrangements are in place to ensure services can continue to be delivered in the event of interruption. An updated business continuity plan and disaster recovery plan was developed in 2023/24 and presented to Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee.</p> <p>Health and Safety Project Officer to help embed health and safety practices and has in place health and safety risk assessments to help mitigate risks.</p> <p>Data Protection Impact Assessments are completed as required to minimise data protection risks.</p>

<p>Managing performance</p>	<p>The Authority has a performance reporting management system in place to ensure that a robust system of performance information is produced to highlight the impact of the work undertaken by the Authority. The system has a dashboard function to provide quick visual overview of performance in different areas.</p> <p>The Authority has developed a new performance framework during 2023/24 with a new set of performance reports for Committees, some of these reports were piloted in 2023/24 with relevant Committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-being Objectives Performance Report – Progress against Priority Indicators/ Projects/ Work Programmes • Assurance Monitoring Report – Compliance, Public and Statutory Duties and Corporate Improvement (including Planning Performance) • Partnership Framework Monitoring Report <p>Staff can submit case impact studies that provide wider insight into the impact of the Authority’s work.</p> <p>Annual reports are published on the Authority’s website, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Report on Meeting Well-being Objectives • Welsh Language Standards Annual Report • Local Development Plan 2 Annual Monitoring Report <p>The Authority submits quarterly planning performance statistics to Welsh Government, this enables the Authority’s performance to be benchmarked against other planning Authority’s.</p> <p>The Authority submits its annual carbon emissions to Welsh Government as part of Public Sector Net Zero reporting requirements.</p>
<p>Robust internal control</p>	<p>The Authority has robust internal control processes in place, which support the achievement of its objectives while managing risks. The Authority’s approach is set in the risk management policy, register and internal audit plan.</p> <p>The Authority has an Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee which provides an independent and high-level resource to support good governance and strong public financial management. The Committee provides a mechanism for effective assurance regarding risk management and the internal control environment.</p>

	<p>Recommendations for improvement made by the Internal Auditors are agreed and monitored.</p> <p>The Authority maintains clear policies and arrangements in respect of counter fraud and anti-corruption. These are the Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy, Whistleblowing Policy & Anti Money Laundering Policy.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer ensures compliance with established policies, procedures laws and regulations.</p> <p>The Data Protection Officer provides governance and oversight activities in terms of Data Protection.</p> <p>Staff are required to complete mandatory training on data protection, cyber security, health and safety, safeguarding and equality.</p> <p>Internal groups are in operation for Health and Safety and Safeguarding. The Chief Executive sits on both groups.</p> <p>The Authority has in place a scheme of delegation for planning matters.</p>
<p>Strong public financial management</p>	<p>The Authority's approach to Financial Management ensures that public money is always safeguarded, ensuring value for money. Its approach supports both long-term achievement of objectives, and shorter term financial and operational performance. The Head of Finance ensures that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, proper financial records and accounts are kept, and oversees an effective system of internal financial control. The Authority has financial regulations and contract standing orders in place which underpin the financial arrangements. The Financial Management Code (FM Code) sets out the standards of financial management and is adopted by the Authority.</p> <p>The S151 officer has statutory reporting duties in respect of unlawful and financially imprudent decision making.</p> <p>Senior managers and budget holders are provided with monthly reports on financial and budget performance. This supports financial management, the delivery of services and promotes good stewardship.</p>

	<p>Budget workshops are held for Members to discuss annual and medium-term financial planning. A draft Budget Planning report is presented to the National Park Authority every February.</p> <p>Budget Performance Reports are provided to the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee.</p> <p>The Annual Statements of Accounts and its performance against key areas of risk are subject to scrutiny by external auditors. Audit Wales passes an opinion on its review of the Authority's performance and Statements of Accounts which is recorded in the AWO Improvement Assessment Letter and the ISA 260 report.</p> <p>National Park Authority approved the setting up of Members and Officers group on income diversification.</p>
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Principal 7: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

The Park's Commitment to Good Governance	How the Park demonstrates these principles
Implementing good practice in transparency & reporting	<p>Strategic plans are subject to consultation, National Park Authority approval and are published on the Authority's Website.</p> <p>All Authority and Committee meetings, agendas and papers are available to the public via the Authority's website and live streamed online.</p> <p>Annual Reports are presented to the National Park Authority for approval and are published on the Authority's website. Where appropriate, Annual Reports are shared with Welsh Government, Audit Wales and the Office of Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.</p>

	<p>The Annual Governance Statement provides transparency on governance arrangements and its effectiveness and identifies planned improvements.</p> <p>The Authority permits the public with the right to speak at meetings of the Authority’s Development Management Committee.</p> <p>The Authority’s performance reporting management system ensures that a robust system of performance monitoring is in place and enables effective performance reporting to the Operational review committee and Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee.</p>
<p>Assurance to deliver effective accountability.</p>	<p>Member scrutiny via Committees is key in delivering effective accountability.</p> <p>Internal audit arrangements provide assurance that key risks are managed and that a sound system of internal control is in place.</p> <p>External audit (Audit Wales) provides assurance that performance is managed and that the use of public money is safeguarded. The Auditors opinion on the Statement of Accounts is published on the Authority website as well as Audit Wales. The Authority acts on recommendations and, where necessary, takes corrective action.</p> <p>Recommendations from inspection & regulatory bodies, where relevant, including good practice, are implemented and monitored.</p> <p>Members are required to declare relevant interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Any related transactions and conflict of interest can thereby be identified and appropriately managed.</p>

6. Governance Improvement Actions from 2022-2023

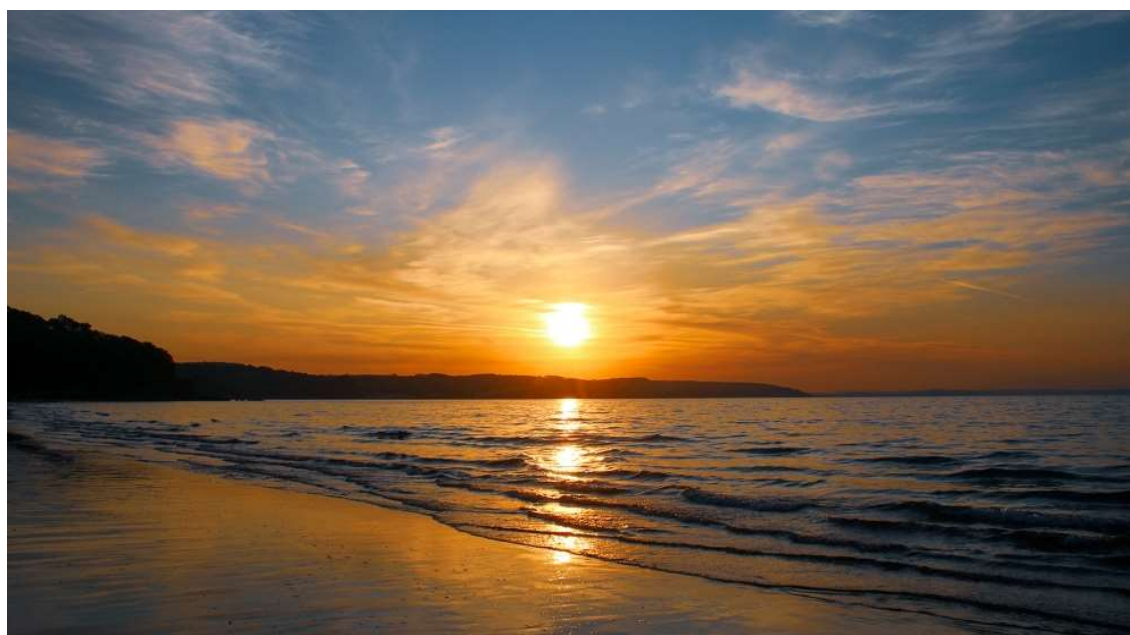
The Authority has a legal responsibility to conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the systems of internal control. After conducting this review, the Authority has assurance that its governance arrangements and systems of control are robust and reflect the principles of the Code of Corporate Governance.

The Annual Governance and improvement assessment 2022-23 contained the following improvement actions. This is how they have been addressed during 2023-24:

Improvement Area	Planned Action	Responsibility	Progress
Health and Safety	Undertake a review of management of health and safety	Health and Safety Project Officer	<p>Health and Safety Policy and associated policies reviewed.</p> <p>A programme of IOSH Managing Safely courses has been delivered to staff.</p> <p>Staff Safety Culture Survey carried out to inform future priorities.</p> <p>New risk assessment template has been developed and adopted. A one-day risk assessment course has been developed and delivered. Work is ongoing to update and move risk assessments into new risk assessment template with implementation of new document storage and control process.</p>
Improve record management processes and practices	Continue implementation of Microsoft 365 across the organisation, including exploring functionality opportunities for	Record Management Group. Management Team.	A record management group with key officers has been put in place to support this work. Work has been initiated to restructure the F Drive to reflect new organisational structure. This has involved data movement

	Sharepoint alongside implementing improved record management processes and practices		sessions with officers which also provided an opportunity to engage with them about how Teams could be best used by their departments. This work is ongoing. New staff intranet has been developed, including creation of corporate document hub.
Mid-term financial planning and cost pressures	Continue to work with Members and Welsh Government to manage mid-term financial challenges and pressures.	CEO, Head of Finance and Fundraising, Management Team.	Budget workshop held during December. Plans to present a deficit budget in February and work identified with Management team to develop options for reducing the deficit. Members Income Diversification group set up.
Review of Corporate Policies	Undertake activities to support delivery of Corporate Improvement Project on management and communication of Corporate Policies and Standards	Performance and Compliance Officer.	New template in place. Corporate Policy section developed for new staff intranet. Existing policies have all been moved to central location in terms of Corporate Policy Review Microsoft Team to help address document control and management issues. Ongoing work of reviewing and moving policies to new template
Pay and Grading Review	Complete and review outcome of Pay and Grading Review	Head of People Services	The review, following some delays because of changes in staffing, is now making good progress with an estimated implementation date of September 2024.
ICT Disaster Recovery	Implement recommendation of internal auditors	Head of Decarbonisation	Disaster Recovery Plan completed and has been shared with Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee. The review of the ICT user policy and Data and Information security policy

			has considered the DR plan
Welsh Language Strategy	Completion and publication of Welsh Language Strategy.	Democratic Services Manager	Welsh Language Strategy approved by National Park Authority and published on Authority website.
Review of Governance	Implement agreed recommendations from Audit Wales review of Governance	Chief Executive	Draft report received during the year; however final report was not published in 2023/24.



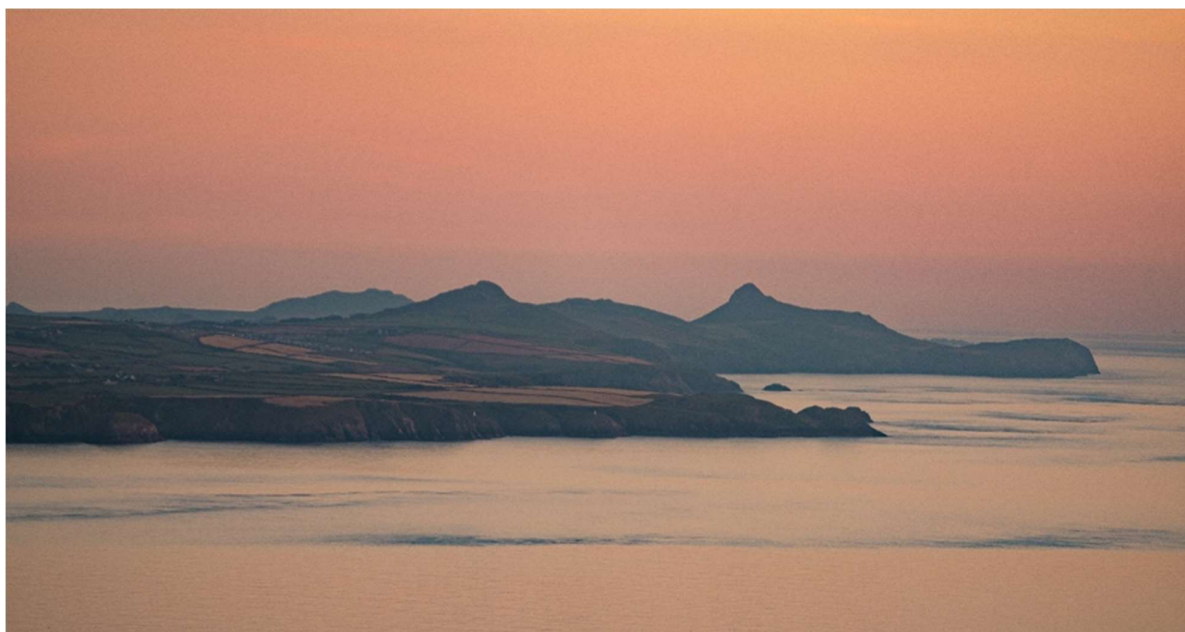
7. Governance Improvement Action Plan 2024-2025

The actions planned for 2024-25 are summarised in the table below and identify the current key weaknesses of the Authority's governance arrangements which have been highlighted through its annual review. Progress will be reported to the Audit & Corporate Services Review Committee as illustrated above and monitored by the Senior Leadership Team. Progress against actions is monitored on the Authority's Performance Reporting System.

Improvement Area	Planned Action	Forum/ Committee	Responsibility	Target date
Procurement processes / Socially Responsible Procurement	Review of procurement approach and processes to take account of legal changes at Welsh and UK Government level and challenges of decarbonisation.	Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance and Fundraising and Head of Decarbonisation.	March 2025
Budgetary Planning	Strengthen the budgetary planning process through departmental consultation. Encourage financial resilience and develop greater agility to respond to economic and funding challenges.	Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	Chief Executive and Head Finance and Fundraising	January 2025
Equality, diversity and inclusion	Approval and publication of revised Equality Plan and Objectives.	National Park Authority.	Performance and Compliance Officer. Head of People Services. Head of Engagement and Inclusion.	December 2024
Staff development	Continue to develop the capability of our workforce to support the delivery of our corporate plan including	HR Committee	Chief Executive and Head of People Services	March 2025

	updating and reviewing our HR policies and embedding the Authority's new organisational structure as implemented in 2022-23. A detailed assessment of its operational training is planned.			
Pay and Grading Review	Complete and review outcome of Pay and Grading Review	HR Committee	Head of People Services	September 2024
Health and Safety – Risk Assessments	Review and update of Risk Assessments to new template following recommendation from Internal Audit	Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	Management Team. Team Leaders. Health and Safety Project Officer.	March 2025
Improve record management processes and practices	Continue implementation of Microsoft 365 across the organisation, including exploring functionality opportunities for Sharepoint alongside implementing improved record management processes and practices. Implement agreed actions following internal audit review of Information, Cyber Security and Data Protection.	Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	Record Management Group. Management Team. Team Leaders.	Long Term Project

Review of Corporate Policies	Continue activities to support delivery of Corporate Improvement Project on management and communication of Corporate Policies and Standards	Audit and Corporate Services Review	Policy area leads within Management Team. Performance and Compliance Officer.	March 2025
ICT Policies	Approval of new ICT User Policy and Information and Data Security Policy	National Park Authority	Head of Decarbonisation.	September 2024.
Review of Governance	Implement agreed recommendations from Audit Wales review of Governance	Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	CEO. Head of People Services. Democratic Services Manager.	March 2025



8. Governance Opinion & Conclusion

The Authority recognises that good governance provides the foundation for the delivery of good quality services that meets the needs of stakeholders and ensures that public money is well spent.

The Authority is satisfied that appropriate governance arrangements are in place and is committed to:

- Continual improvement through the implementation of the action plan for 2024-2025.
- Continual review and monitoring of its governance effectiveness.
- Commitment to adhering to the CIPFA/SOLACE code of corporate governance in local government.

Signed: **Councillor D Clements, Chair**

Signed:..... **Tegryn Jones, Chief Executive**