

Report of the Head of Finance & Fundraising

Subject: Annual Governance Statement 2024-25

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.

Members are invited to contribute to and shape the contents & format of the draft 2024-25 statement.

The final Annual Governance Statement when agreed by the Authority, will be published with the Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025.

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

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ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2025



Vision: To ensure a vibrant, sustainable future for the environment and for those who live, work and visit the National Park.
www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

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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, because 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 plan 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

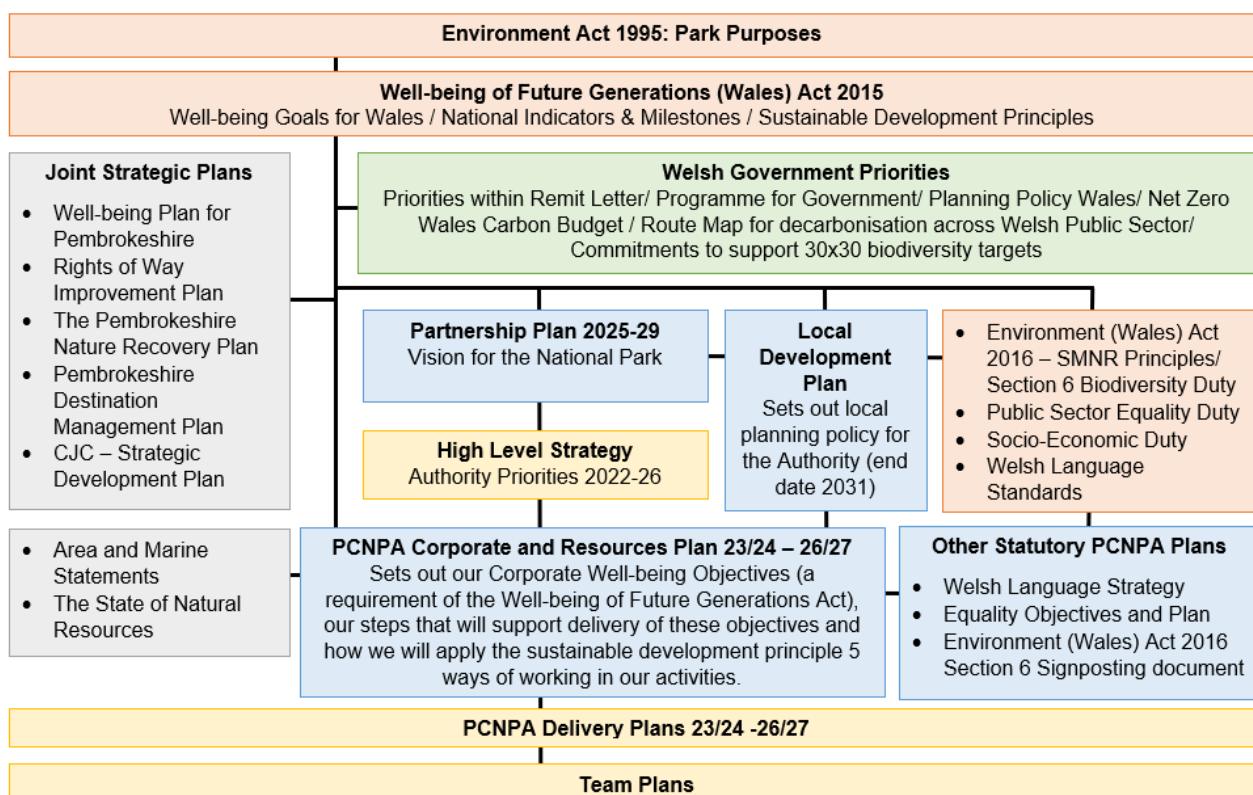
3.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled, and through which it is accountable to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to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

Ensuring a vibrant, sustainable future for the environment and for those who live, work and visit the National Park.

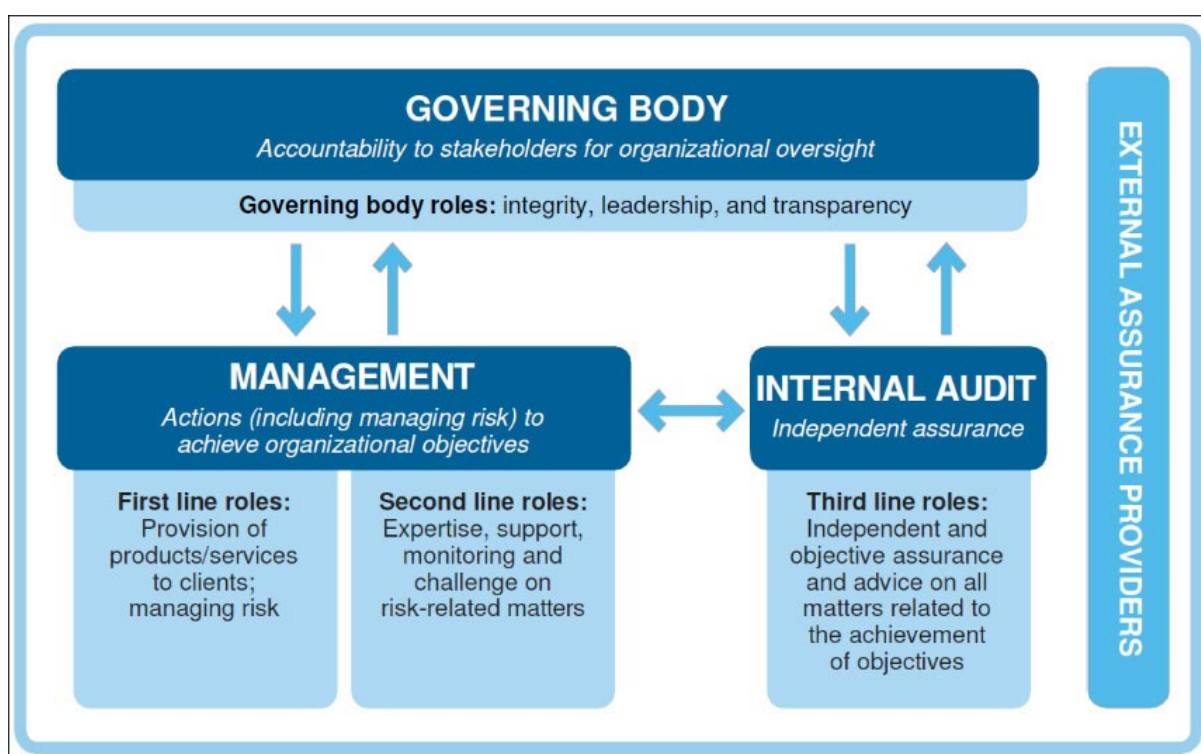
Diagram of our Plans and Statutory Duties – Where the Corporate and Resources Plan sits



3.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk to an agreed levels of risk appetite. 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 ten 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, headed by the CEO, 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.
- e. The Authority has adopted through its risk management policy a Three Lines Models of Assurance.



The three-line model of assurance comprise the following, integrated with the risk register:



These are discussed in more detail below:

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. People Services Committee
•Reviews and makes recommendations on HR policies. Overview of staff recruitment, remuneration and development. Oversees the support and development of Authority members including induction, training and making recommendations to the NPA.
7. 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.
8. Investigating & Disciplinary Committee
•This considers and determines matters relating to the investigation and disciplinary of senior officers.
9. Grievance Committee
•Considers and determines matters raised from grievances by staff.
10. Appeals Committee
•Considers and determines matters relating to dismissals.
11. Continuous Improvement Group
•This group meets as and when required to review any aspects of the work programme and make recommendations.

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 and provide direction to the management team and staff. The performance of the Chief Executive is reviewed by Members through a Performance Review Panel.

Management Team

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

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 informs 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 be 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

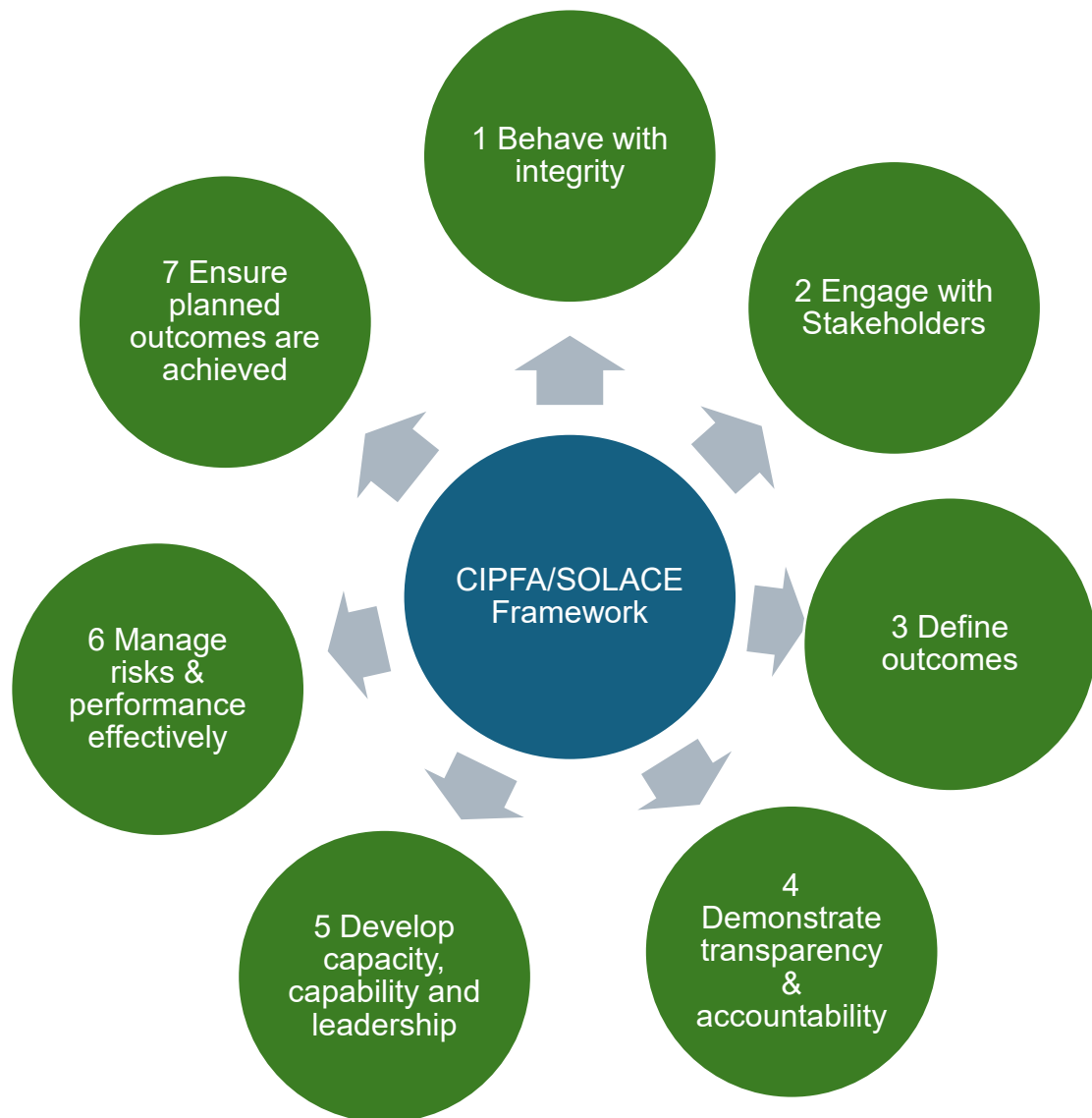
	1989 to report on the Authority's conduct and standards function.
Data Protection Officer	The Authority engages an external Data Protection Officer, a requirement for Public Bodies under the UK GDPR. The Data Protection Officer assists the Authority to monitor internal compliance, inform and advise on 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

Principle 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 Partnership Plan 2025-2029. A revised partnership plan was approved in 2024/25. The plan builds on previous plans, taking account of changes in legislation and policy, and incorporates learning from consultation and from ongoing conversation with partner organisations. • Local Development Plan 2. In 2024/25 the Authority commenced a review of LDP 2, the draft review report was presented to Members and approved for consultation on 11 December 2024. The review report was approved by Members at the 26 March 2025 NPA. • Corporate and Resources Plan and Well-being Objectives • Equality Plan and Objectives Authority reviewed and approved updated Equality Plan and Objectives in 2024/25. • Welsh Language Promotion 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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Standards • Standing Orders relating to Contracting Procedures. During 2024/25 the Authority commissioned external review of these Orders to support updating them to take account of changes to UK procurement regulations. • Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy • Employee Code of Conduct <p>During 2024/25 the Authority approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy and Socially Responsible and Sustainable Procurement Policy. This will support the Authority to comply with expectations under the Socially Responsible Procurement Duty • Updated Asset Management Strategy and Policy <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. Management Team approved a revised policy in line with scheme of delegation in 2024/25.
Demonstrating Strong Commitment to Ethical Values	<p>The Standards Committee champion high standards of ethical governance from elected members and the Authority as a whole.</p> <p>The Authority was awarded the Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development in December 2021. A programme of training and workshop sessions are delivered during the year to Members. In 2024/25 Members also participated in training sessions delivered by Welsh Government on Effective Financial Governance, Governance of Risk and Sustainable and Ethical Governance.</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</p>

	<p>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 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Welsh Language, Environmental, Socially Responsible and 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. In 2024/25 an updated trigger and guidance document was developed to support officers with this process. • Staff are required to complete safeguarding and equality training. • 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." • Authority approved Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy in 2024/25.
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>
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Principle 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. Members of the public can speak at Development Management Committee.</p> <p>The Authority provides responses to Freedom of Information, Environmental Information and Subject Access requests and has in place a publication scheme. In 2024/25 the Authority initiated work to update its 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. The Authority did experience difficulties with provision of this data during 2024/25 following upgrade to planning system. However, this issue was resolved by the end of the year.</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 • 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. • Trade Union involvement in the Pay and Grading Review exercise
Comprehensive Stakeholder & Community Engagement	<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 2024/25 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on Special Qualities consultation in 2024, further formal consultation carried out on draft Partnership Plan (National Park Management Plan). Following feedback from the consultation a meeting was held with some of the key identified leads and delivery partners. • Consultation on draft Equality Plan and Objectives • Consultation on LDP2 Review Report • Consultation activities on Cresswell Quay Conservation Area and Management Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation activities in relation to Proposed Article 4 (1) Direction for 28-day use of land for camping, caravans and /or mobile homes. <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.</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's Engagement and Inclusion Team have carried out a Stakeholder Mapping Exercise and have also developed a survey for volunteers and project participants.</p> <p>Rangers Team have been involved in the Pembrokeshire Services Board Well-being Planning Workshops for St Davids and Crymych run by Together for Change.</p> <p>Officers worked closely with local community in developing Oriel y Parc's "Courage and Community – RNLI 200 Cymru" exhibition.</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
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Joint Committee for Southwest Wales • Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust • Town & Community Councils • Third sector organisations such as Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum <p>The Authority enters into partnership agreements to deliver projects and outcomes and works cooperatively to deliver those outcomes.</p>
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Principle 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 Partnership Plan 2025-2029. A revised partnership plan was approved in 2024/25. The plan builds on previous plans, taking account of changes in legislation and policy, and incorporates learning from consultation and from ongoing conversation with partner organisations. • Local Development Plan 2. In 2024/25 the Authority commenced a review of LDP 2, the draft review report was presented to Members and approved for consultation on 11 December 2024. The review report was approved by Members at the 26 March 2025 NPA. • Authority high level strategy • Corporate and Resources Plan and Well-being Objectives • Equality Plan and Objectives. Authority reviewed and approved updated Equality Plan and Objectives in 2024/25.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Language Promotion 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 • 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 act for nature or experience the outdoors and wonders of the Park. <p>Authority has in place an Equality Plan and Objective, Welsh Language Strategy and a Section 6 Biodiversity Signposting document.</p> <p>The Authority approved Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy and Asset Management Strategy in 2024/25.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The Authority has Member representation on the Corporate Joint Committee for Southwest Wales. The Committee will improve the regional planning, co-ordination and delivery of transport, land use planning, economic development and energy.</p>
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Principle 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. Nine integrated assessments were carried out in 2024/25.</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. Quarterly summary performance reports are now provided to Management Team.</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. This includes a risk appetite policy.</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>
Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	<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>

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

Commitment to Good Governance	
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 further embedding this new structure during the year.</p> <p>A review of the Countryside Team was also undertaken in 2024/25.</p> <p>The Authority has embedded the Health and Safety function within the HR team 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	<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>The People Services 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</p>

<p>Organisation's leadership & other individuals</p>	<p>annually. The Authority was awarded the Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development in December 2021. A programme of training and workshop sessions are delivered during the year to Members. In 2024/25 Members also participated in training sessions delivered by Welsh Government on Effective Financial Governance, Governance of Risk and Sustainable and Ethical Governance.</p> <p>Mandatory online training in in place for staff on data protection, health & safety, cyber security, equality and safeguarding.</p> <p>Other learning and development needs are identified through the annual performance review cycle. This informs the organisational development plan and individual training needs.</p> <p>Professional Development Programmes are utilised through Pembrokeshire County Council and Academy Wales.</p> <p>Staff who are members of professional bodies are required to undertake relevant continual professional development.</p> <p>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.</p>
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Principle 6: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.

Governance	
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 internal audit carried out a Risk Maturity follow up, several recommendations were made as part of this audit and work is being undertaken to implement them, this includes update to Risk Objectives, strategy, gathering data from assurance sources and producing further guidance for staff.</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. Business continuity and disaster recovery plans are in place. A business continuity exercise was carried out in 2024/25.</p> <p>The Authority has in place a Health and Safety Group, on which Members of Management Team sit and this group helps embed and monitor health and safety practices across the Authority. Health and safety risk assessments are in place to help mitigate risks. A Risk Assessment Management Plan procedure is in place to help support updating and record management of risk assessments.</p>

	<p>Data Protection Impact Assessments are completed as required to minimise data protection risks. Twelve data protection impact assessments were completed in 2024/25, reflecting the introduction of a number of new systems by the Authority during the year,</p>
Managing performance	<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 developed a new performance framework during 2023/24 with a new set of performance reports for Committees. The following reports were presented to relevant Committees and NPA in 2024/25:</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 routinely 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 • Annual Equality 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. The Authority did experience difficulties with provision of this data during 2024/25 following upgrade to planning system. However, this issue was resolved by the end of the year.</p> <p>The Authority submits its annual carbon emissions to Welsh Government as part of Public Sector Net Zero reporting requirements.</p>

	The Authority considers recommendations from both local and national performance work of Audit Wales.
Robust internal control	<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. An updated retention schedule and Record Management and Retention policy were put in place in 2024/25.</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 and other matters. An updated scheme of delegation was approved by Members at the 23/10/24 NPA.</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 year.</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. This group met on a regular basis during 2024/25.</p>
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Principle 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, unless explicit resolution not to do so for reasons of overriding commercial or other personal confidentiality.</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>

	Officers initiated review of publication scheme in 2024/25.
Assurance to deliver effective accountability.	<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 and any lessons learned are implemented and monitored.</p> <p>Members are required to declare and record all relevant interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct. These are noted in committee minutes on each occasion where they are relevant to the business at hand. Any related transactions and conflict of interest can thereby be identified and appropriately managed.</p>

6. Governance Improvement Actions from 2024-2025

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 2023-24 contained the following improvement actions. This is how they have been addressed during 2024-25:

Improvement Area	Planned Action	Forum/ Committee	Responsibility	Target date	Status / Progress Commentary
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.	National Park Authority	Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance and Fundraising and Head of Decarbonisation	March 2025	Partially implemented – Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy and Policy approved. Work initiated with external consultants on review of Standing Orders for Contracting Procedures.
Budgetary Planning	Strengthen the budgetary planning process through departmental consultation. Encourage financial resilience and develop greater agility to respond to economic and funding challenges.	National Park Authority	Chief Executive and Head Finance and Fundraising	January 2025	Fully implemented
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	December 2024	Fully implemented – New plan approved at February NPA and plan published on website in March. Slight delay

			of Engagement and Inclusion.		due to creation of Easy Read version for consultation.
Staff development	Continue to develop the capability of our workforce to support the delivery of our corporate plan including 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.	HR Committee	Chief Executive and Head of People Services	March 2025	Partially implemented - We are systematically reviewing and updating HR Policies and Procedures in line with best HR practice and legislation. Using the annual staff wellbeing and development reviews we are identifying training and responding to training and development needs that accord with the organisation's priorities. A comprehensive overarching training and development plan linked to job descriptions and person specifications is in progress.
Pay and Grading Review	Complete and review outcome of Pay and Grading Review	HR Committee	Head of People Services	September 2024	Fully implemented
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	Fully implemented – Risk Assessments moved to new template and new document management process in place
Improve record management	Continue implementation of Microsoft 365 across the	Audit and Corporate Services	Record Management Group.	March 2027 (Long	Partially implemented – Retention schedule in place and NPA

processes and practices	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.	Review Committee	Management Team. Team Leaders.	Term Project)	approved Record Management and Retention Policy. Some new process in place using Microsoft 365. Activity to restructure F Drive underway. Activities initiated in support of completing internal audit actions.
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	Partially Implemented – Significant number of policies reviewed in 2024/25. Tracker document in development to support next steps with clear forward work programme.
ICT Policies	Approval of new ICT User Policy and Information and Data Security Policy	National Park Authority	Head of Decarbonisation .	September 2024.	Fully Implemented – Policies approved at 1/5/24 NPA
Review of Governance	Implement agreed recommendations from Audit Wales review of Governance.	National Park Authority /Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	CEO. Head of People Services. Democratic Services Manager.	March 2025	Partially Implemented: Welsh Government have now completed delivery of a programme of training and have worked with the Welsh National Park Authorities to develop a Governance

					Handbook which was published in February 2025. Work has now commenced looking at an accountability framework / performance protocol for NPA Members
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7. Governance Improvement Action Plan 2025-2026

The actions planned for 2025-26 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	Status
Procurement processes to update to reflect Procurement Act 2023.	Agree new procurement Contract Standing Orders to reflect changes in legislation	National Park Authority	Head of Finance and Fundraising	July 2025	Partially Implemented – Revised Contract Standing Orders completed - for approval in July 2025 NPA. Training plan initiated for staff on procurement changes & processes.
Improved Budgetary Planning process to be implemented to accelerate budget setting with opportunity for review	Work across the Authority to set a balanced budget, making best use of reserves and funding received from Welsh Government and other sources.	National Park Authority, Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	Chief Executive, S151 Officer, Head of Finance and Fundraising, Management Team	February 2026	

Improve record management processes and practices	Work to re-structure the F Drive and where appropriate migrate documents to Teams/ SharePoint. Activity to update records of processing.	Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	Record Management Group, Management Team and Team Leaders	March 2026	Partially implemented – Retention schedule in place and NPA approved Record Management and Retention Policy. Some new process in place using Microsoft 365. Work to be further progressed in 2025/26.
Review of Corporate policies against forward work programme/ tracker document.	Review of Corporate Policies against forward work programme/ tracker document.	Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	Policy area leads within Management Team. Performance and Compliance Officer.	March 2026	Partially Implemented – Significant number of policies reviewed in 2024/25. Tracker document in development to support next steps with clear forward work programme.
Review of Governance	Implement the recommendations of the Welsh Government Review of Member Evaluation	National Park Authority and Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	Chair, Members, Head of People Services, Democratic Services Manager	March 2026	
Cyber Security	Review existing arrangements and implement recommendations; update legacy hardware; raise awareness with staff and	Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	Head of Decarbonisation; IT Team Leader	March 2026	

	members through training. Undertake "Cyber Essentials" Review				
Finance system implementation and reporting. Update financial standards & procedures to reflect changes.	Review financial standards & processes. Ensure revised and/or new reports in place for effective financial monitoring. Ensure new finance system working effectively.	Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	Head of Finance & Fundraising	December 2025	
Workforce and People	Development of Establishment and Workforce Plan	Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	Head of People	March 2027	
Risk Management	Implement recommendations from Internal Audit Risk Maturity Follow Up	Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee	CEO	September 2026	
Staff development & training	Continue to develop the capability of our workforce to support the delivery of our corporate plan including updating and reviewing our HR policies. A detailed assessment of its operational training is in progress.	HR Committee	Chief Executive and Head of People Services	March 2026	Partially implemented - We are systematically reviewing and updating HR Policies and Procedures in line with best HR practice and legislation. A comprehensive overarching training and development plan is in progress.

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 2025-2026.
- Continual review and monitoring of its governance effectiveness.
- Commitment to adhering to the CIPFA/SOLACE code of corporate governance in local government.

Signed:**Madeleine Harvard, Chair**

Signed: **Tegryn Jones, Chief Executive**

