

Report of: Chief Executive

Subject: Support for Visit Pembrokeshire 2026-2029

Decision Required: Yes

Recommendation: Members are asked to agree one of the four options provided in section 4.

1. Key Messages

The paper asks Members to make a decision on whether they wish to provide financial support up to 2029.

2. Background

- 2.1 In February 2020 the Authority agreed to support the setting up of Visit Pembrokeshire as a trade led, stand-alone Destination Marketing Organisation for Pembrokeshire. The focus of the organisation was to be on leading the delivery of the county's tourism strategy (its Destination Management Plan) in partnership, leading on destination marketing activity, campaign and project delivery, industry liaison and support, research and intelligence, advocacy, branding and supporting some events. Tourism infrastructure services were kept out of scope, such as the delivery of public toilets, coastal bus services, etc. This was the first DMO of its type in Wales and this is still the case.
- 2.2 In addition to supporting the principle of setting up the new organising and agreeing to appoint a Director to sit on the Board, the Authority agreed financial support on the following basis:

	In-Kind support	Cash	Total
Year 1	£34,900	£30,000	£64,900
Year 2	£34,900	£20,000	£54,900
Year 3	£34,900	£10,000	£44,900
Year 4	£34,900		£34,900
Year 5	£34,900		£34,900

- 2.3 This scale of the contribution was based on the recommendations of a consultant's report prepared during 2019 and was based on a series of assumptions of what was required to support Visit Pembrokeshire in its set up period and first years of operation. The exact nature of this support was not specified as at the time it was not known where Visit Pembrokeshire would require support, however, given the nature of its work it was assumed that the majority of the support would be relating to marketing and public relations.

2.4 Visit Pembrokeshire was set up in November 2020 and in September 2021, the Authority agreed to amend the funding for that year from in-kind to cash to enable Visit Pembrokeshire to provide match funding to secure grant funding. A contribution of £25K was agreed and this arrangement has continued until the current year.

2.5 Visit Pembrokeshire have given an annual presentation to the Authority and the main outcomes are:

- An increase in membership
- 9 strategic partners (which pay a higher annual premium each for enhanced membership benefits). Note there were no strategic partners when Visit Pembrokeshire was first launched.
- 89% retention against the target of 85%, with over 100 new members in the financial year
- 2.8 million page views on Google
- 1.5 million unique visitors to the Visit Pembrokeshire website annually
- 12,000 newsletter subscribers, 58% email open rate, 88,000 social media followers with an average social media post reach of 18,000 people.
- A new partnership with Transport for Wales and Great Western Railways to promote visiting the county by train and to raise the profile of our county 98 towns, (which were two objectives identified in the 2024-25 Destination Management Plan)
- Delivery of the open to all project in partnership with the National Park Authority and funded by SPF (Shared Prosperity Fund) funding which supported businesses to become more inclusive, accessible, and disabled friendly.
- B2B (Business to Business) Events – 12 events delivered across the year to include the annual Croeso Awards delivered in partnership with Pembrokeshire College and Seren with 234 attendees.
- Development of a new www.visitpembrokeshire.com website (soft launched in February 2025)
- A revised Destination Management Strategy that has a greater focus on Regenerative Tourism and managing visitor pressures.

2.6 Growth in Private sector income since Visit Pembrokeshire's launch in November

Year	PCNAP / PCC Grant (combined)	Membership Income	No of New members	No of Strategic / Ambassador Partners	Total Income	% public/ private funding
2020/21	£224,000	£49,765	54	0	£273,765	82/18%
2021/22	£218,900	£69,811	47	3SP / 2AP	£288,711	76/24%
2022/23	£199,000	£93,683	84	6SP / 3AP	£292,683	68/32%
2023/24	£199,000	£97,084	102	7SP / 4AP	£296,084	67/33%
2024/25	£199,000	£113,000 (forecast)	110 (forecast)	9SP / 3AP	£312,000	64/36%
2025/26	£174,000 (forecast)	£123,200 (forecast)	138 (forecast)	9SP / 3AP	£297,200	59/41%

Figures provided from a table in PCCs paper to Cabinet: [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 07/07/2025 10:00](#)

- 2.7 The current funding agreement is coming to an end this year and discussions have been undertaken between Visit Pembrokeshire, Pembrokeshire County Council and the Authority regarding future support. While good progress has been made in reducing the public sector contribution provided to Visit Pembrokeshire, it is not considered likely that the organisation could function in its current form without further public sector contribution over the coming years

3. Strategic Policy Context

- 3.1 Tourism is one of the key industries in Pembrokeshire and work of Visit Pembrokeshire plays an important role in supporting the industry. The model developed in 2020 provides a public / private / third sector model (through the role of PLANED) that provides a voice for the Authority on the Board of the organisation.

Significant time and resources have been invested over the past five years to support Visit Pembrokeshire a failure to continue to provide this support over the next few years could potentially undermine this work.

- 3.2 The current proposal would see support provided for Visit Pembrokeshire until 2029. There is a key change on the horizon, with the ability to set a Visitor Levy. While Pembrokeshire County Council have publicly stated that they will not introduce a levy before 2027, in reality it would have been difficult to do this. It will be a decision for any new administration in Pembrokeshire County Council following the 2027 election whether a levy is introduced. If a levy is introduced then some of the funding raised could be used to support Visit Pembrokeshire, as well as key visitor infrastructure such as toilets. A failure to introduce a levy would probably mean Visit Pembrokeshire becoming an entirely Membership led organisation without public support along with fewer public facilities being provided. Therefore, the current proposal seeks to provide security of funding over the next few years while there is a debate and decision on the levy. Either of these options provides an exit strategy for the Authority.
- 3.3 The decision on whether a levy will be introduced will be one for Pembrokeshire County Council, with PCNPA, having only a role as a statutory consultee. In view of this it is considered important for PCNPA to support Visit Pembrokeshire and the wider tourism industry over the next few years.
- 3.4 While this is a decision for the Authority, over the past five years there has been a strong partnership between Visit Pembrokeshire, Pembrokeshire County Council and PCC in relation to tourism. On the 7th July PCC Cabinet agreed to provide Visit Pembrokeshire with “a flat grant agreement worth £152,000 per year between April 2026 to March 2029”.

4. Financial Considerations

- 4.1 The Authority is facing a significant financial deficit and seeking to work towards setting a balanced budget. Discontinuing this support is an option on the list of cost savings currently being considered. However, as outlined above, there are strong strategic reasons why the Authority should provide support for the 2026-2029 period.

4.2 A number of options are proposed:

Option 1: No further funding is provided to Visit Pembrokeshire

Cost implications: Saving of £25,000

Impact:

- Likely loss of an Authority appointed Director on the Board of Visit Pembrokeshire
- Loss of influence on the future development of tourism in Pembrokeshire
- Perception that the Authority is not supporting tourism (however, we provide significant support via Coast to Coast, facilities, visitor attractions, etc)
- Possible loss of opportunity to influence discussions on introducing a levy.
- Negative impact on the work being undertaken by Visit Pembrokeshire.

Option 2: Continue to fund at the current rate of £25,000

Cost implications: no cost savings, with a need to find £25,000 of savings from other sources

Impact:

- The Authority would continue to appoint a Director on the Board of Visit Pembrokeshire and have a voice on the future direction of tourism in Pembrokeshire

Option 3: Continue to provide funding but at a reduced level, for example a 10% reduction to a rate of £22,500

Cost implications: a small saving of £2,500 with a need to seek saving of £22,500 from other sources

Impacts:

- Minimal change on the current situation, however, a saving of 10% would not have a significant impact on the National Park Authority, while it would have more of an impact on the work of Visit Pembrokeshire.

Option 4: Continue to provide funding for Visit Pembrokeshire but on a phased reduction basis, e.g.

2026-2027 - £25K

2027-2028 - £22.5K

2028 – 2029 - £20K

Cost Implications: a small and increasing saving.

Impacts:

- This approach would provide a further incentive for Visit Pembrokeshire to make up any difference. While any reduction in funding would provide a challenge for Visit Pembrokeshire, the scale of this reduction is unlikely to have a significant impact.

5. Risk and Compliance Considerations

- 5.1 From a risk perspective the Authority needs to balance the internal challenge of balancing its budget with providing support for an organisation with a significant impact on a key industry impacting the National Park. Through our current involvement we have been able to influence the new Destination Management Strategy to take account of key PCNPA priorities such as regenerative tourism.
- 5.2 A failure to provide support may impact on our ability to influence and possibly benefit from key developments such as the introduction of the Visitor Levy.

6. Impact on our Public Sector Duties

6.1 Integrated Assessment Completed: No

6.2 Equality, Socio-Economic, Health and Human Rights Impacts

Continued support of Visit Pembrokeshire makes a contribution to the socio-economic wellbeing of the area.

6.3 Welsh Language Impacts

Through public sector funding Visit Pembrokeshire is required to meet a number of the Authority's Welsh Language Standards.

6.4 Section 6 Biodiversity Duty and Carbon Emission Impacts

While the support for Visit Pembrokeshire has limited direct impact, support and engagement with Visit Pembrokeshire enables the Authority to promote other organisations to take account of Biodiversity and Climate Issues. This will be useful as we seek to move towards the National Park moving towards being carbon neutral.

6.5 Well-being Goals for Wales and 5 Ways of Working (Sustainable Development Principles) Impacts

Support for Visit Wales would contribute towards the following ways of working:

- Collaboration
- Integration
- Involvement

While it can also contribute to the long-term vision for tourism in Pembrokeshire and seeking to prevent some of the negative impacts of tourism

This support will also contribute towards delivering the following well-being goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

7. Conclusion

Supporting Visit Pembrokeshire is one of the ways that the Authority can support the tourism industry and the communities of Pembrokeshire. While the Authority is facing significant financial challenges, there are strong strategic reasons why the Authority should support Visit Pembrokeshire until 2029.

8. List Background Documentation:

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