

**Report of: National Park and Marine Policy Officer**

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**Subject: National Park Partnership Plan 2025-2029: Partnership Forum**

**Decision Required:** Yes

**Recommendation:**

The Authority is recommended to:

- a. Approve, subject to any comments, draft Terms of Reference for a Partnership Forum to assist in delivery of the Partnership Plan 2025-2029 (for subsequent agreement by the Partnership Forum)
- b. Agree Member representation on the Partnership Forum

**1 Key Messages**

A Partnership Forum is proposed, to help deliver, monitor and review the Partnership Plan 2025-2029.

This report outlines the background to this proposal. It suggests functions, membership, administrative arrangements and terms of reference for the Partnership Forum.

It is proposed that the Chair and Deputy Chair of the National Park Authority represent the Members at Partnership Forum meetings. Officer representation would be drawn from senior management and relevant topic leads.

Draft Terms of Reference for the Forum are included at Annex 1 to this report.

**2 Background**

A key theme to emerge from engagement while preparing the National Park Partnership Plan 2025-2029 was that a “Plan partnership” should be established early in the Plan cycle. Proponents of the idea included the Campaign for National Parks, the Friends of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, and Natural Resources Wales.

There are many partnerships in Pembrokeshire. However, there is no single strategic partnership with an overall remit to uphold National Park purposes or to help implement and monitor the Partnership Plan.

An initial meeting of key lead and delivery partners (as identified through the Partnership Plan process) was held on 28th January 2025. At that meeting, attendees were updated on Plan development, and the case for and potential roles of a partnership were explored. There was general support for a partnership.

At the National Park Authority meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025, the Partnership Plan 2025-2029 was approved, and officers were granted delegated responsibility to continue with the development of a 'Plan Partnership Group'.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> May officers met with Eryri National Park Authority's Partnerships Manager to learn more about the role of Fforwm Eryri in implementing Eryri's management plan, *Cynllun Eryri*.

On 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025 a meeting was held with partners with statutory and or monitoring responsibilities (including third sector organisations) relevant to the Partnership Plan. Eryri's Partnerships Manager kindly joined the meeting and responded to a number of questions.

### **3 Functions**

On the basis of these discussions, it is suggested that the main roles of the Partnership Forum should be:

#### **(a) Taking a strategic view**

The Partnership Plan nominally covers the period 2025-2029, although it includes a longer-term vision and commitments which extend beyond 2029.

Five years is a short time frame in the context of some of the issues. Being able to draw on a range of external expertise, build cooperation and maintain a strategic view on this longer journey is essential.

#### **(b) Fostering collaboration in the spirit of section 62(ii) of the Environment Act 1995**

The Partnership Forum would provide a way for relevant authorities to demonstrate their legal duty "to have regard to the purposes for which National Parks are designated" (section 62ii of the Environment Act 1995). In practice, National Park purposes are in many cases congruent with likely Forum members' goals.

#### **(c) Identifying / filling gaps in either coverage or scale in the Plan**

Based on state of the Park evidence, several themes require additional effort during the Plan period and beyond. Examples include nature recovery, water quality, carbon management, climate adaptation, affordable housing and poverty. A function of the Partnership would be to help identify integrated solutions (including potential funding opportunities) within the Plan period.

It is recognised that some issues are already the subject of partnership effort. Relevant partnerships include the Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership, Nutrient Management Boards, and the Public Services Board and its various sub-groups. The Partnership Forum would view issues through the lens of National Park purposes and seek to add value to existing partnerships.

There may be potential for collaboration on area-based solutions (e.g. regarding water quality or historic landscape management). These could involve geographical communities as well as communities of interest.

(d) Contributing to progress reports

The Partnership Plan includes summary assessments of the state of the National Park, together with measures of policy effectiveness and of project impact. Most of this data is already routinely collected by the Authority or its partners.

Progress reports produced under the auspices of the Partnership Forum might include a mid-term (2027) update on the state of the Park and reports on the impacts of partners' actions. An aim would be to integrate data collection where appropriate with the National Park Authority's corporate planning and performance monitoring framework.

(e) Reviewing the Plan

Participation in the foregoing activities would put members of the Partnership Forum in a good position to assist with all aspects of Plan review.

The National Park Authority would however maintain statutory responsibility for production of the Partnership Plan<sup>1</sup>. This would include approval of the review process for the Plan and approving / adopting consultation and final Plan documents.

#### **4 Membership**

It is envisaged that the Forum would evolve over time according to need and opportunity. For Partnership Forum meetings with a specific thematic and / or geographic focus, additional invitations might be extended (including invitations to those making presentations to the Forum).

The Partnership Forum will be made up of partners and representative bodies that make diverse contributions to delivering the Partnership Plan. An indicative list of engaged organisations is given below; this is neither exhaustive nor exclusive.

Afonydd Cymru  
Butterfly Conservation  
Cadw  
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water  
Dyfed-Powys Police  
Farmers Union Wales  
Friends of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park  
Hywel Dda University Health Board  
Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service  
National Farmers Union  
National Trust Cymru  
Natural Resources Wales  
Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services  
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority  
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Next Generation Group  
Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum  
Pembrokeshire College  
Pembrokeshire County Council  
Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership  
Representation for the business sector

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<sup>1</sup> Section 66(1) of the Environment Act 1995

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
Visit Pembrokeshire  
Wildlife Trust South and West Wales

It is proposed that the Chair and Deputy Chair of the National Park Authority attend Partnership Forum meetings. Officer representation would be drawn from senior management and relevant service / topic leads.

## **5 Administrative arrangements**

It is proposed that the Partnership Forum meet quarterly, with an inaugural meeting in 2025. Meeting dates would be set in advance, with reference to the Authority's Calendar of Meetings.

## **6 Terms of Reference**

Draft Terms of Reference for the Partnership Forum are attached at Annex 1 to this report. If approved by the National Park Authority, these would be presented to the Partnership Forum at its inaugural meeting for agreement. Any substantive proposals for change by the Partnership Forum would be considered by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the National Park Authority.

## **7 Consultation on this report**

Senior Leadership Team, Strategic Policy Manager, Performance and Compliance Officer.

## **8 Strategic policy context**

The information and recommendations contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic policy context.

Specifically, the proposal will help implement, monitor and review the approved Pembrokeshire Coast Partnership Plan 2025-2029, the themes of which carry through to the Authority's corporate objectives.

## **9 Financial considerations**

Administration of the Partnership Forum would be undertaken using existing resources. It is envisaged that a well-functioning Partnership could help reduce Authority resource requirements in terms of Plan review.

Any Partnership-originated project ideas to be implemented by the Authority would be required to pass through Authority processes and procedures and to comply with Authority standards.

The Partnership would need to be periodically reviewed in terms of its added value to Park purposes.

## **10 Risk and compliance considerations**

The proposed Partnership Forum provides a means of adding value to the design and results of programmes to achieve National Park purposes.

Authority processes, procedures and compliance requirements will apply where relevant (e.g. the General Data Protection Regulation, transposed into UK law by the Data Protection Act 2018).

The draft Terms of Reference at Annex 1 consider the Authority's Partnership Framework Standards.

## **11 Impact on Public Sector Duties**

Integrated Assessment completed: No (scoped out)

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

The Partnership Plan 2025-2029 is supported by integrated assessment, which shaped policy prior to adoption and includes recommendations which may be applicable at a project level.

### Welsh Language Impacts

The Partnership Plan 2025-2029 is supported by Welsh Language impact assessment which shaped policy prior to adoption and includes recommendations which may be applicable at a project level.

Partnership Forum business will comply with Welsh Language standards.

### Section 6 Biodiversity Duty and Carbon Emission Impacts

Partnerships play an important role in supporting the National Park Authority to meet the Partnership Plan missions for Conservation and for Climate change and natural resources, and to meet corporate objectives.

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

The Partnership Plan 2025-2029 is aligned with the Well-being Goals for Wales and the five ways of working.

## **12 Conclusion**

Members are invited to consider these proposals and to agree draft Terms of Reference for, and Member representation on, the Partnership Forum.

## **13 Background documents**

National Park Authority report 07/25 (NPA 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025)

*(For further information please contact Michel Regelous, National Park and Marine Policy Officer, extension 4827.)*

## **Annex 1 – Draft terms of reference for Pembrokeshire Coast Partnership Forum**

### **(i) Introduction**

The Pembrokeshire Coast Partnership Forum (“Partnership Forum”) is a forum for those involved in managing and shaping the future of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park.

The Partnership Forum operates within the context of UK National Park purposes:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.<sup>2</sup>

If there is a conflict between the purposes that cannot be resolved, the first purpose has greater weight. This is known as the ‘Sandford principle’.

These draft Terms of Reference outline the purpose, membership, administration and reporting of the Partnership Forum.

The Partnership Forum does not constitute a partnership in legal terms.

### **(ii) Purposes of the Partnership Forum**

The Partnership Forum exists in order to:

- act as a champion for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and as a link to other forums
- encourage positive partnership working amongst key stakeholders across the National Park
- implement and deliver the Pembrokeshire Coast Partnership Plan, for example: deliver action in accordance with partners’ responsibilities and goals; add value to other relevant workstreams; identify management priorities and gaps in the Partnership Plan; develop ideas to be taken forward by relevant partners for funding and delivery
- contribute insights and data to assess the effectiveness of policy
- contribute information describing the positive impacts of partner actions, including case studies
- assist with review of the Partnership Plan
- encourage others to engage with the aims of the Plan
- represent a diverse and balanced range of stakeholder interests active in delivering within the National Park

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<sup>2</sup> The special qualities of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park are: Landscapes and seascapes of exceptional diversity and quality; Outstanding coastal scenery; Distant, uninterrupted views and open horizons; Beaches; Spectacular geology and geomorphology; Rich and varied wildlife; Tranquillity, soundscapes and wildness; Dark skies; Rich heritage and culture; Welsh language and Pembrokeshire dialects; Historic patterns of settlement and buildings; Historic patterns of land use and traditional boundaries; Excellent opportunities to enjoy and experience the National Park; A comprehensive network of Rights of Way; The combination of special qualities; A sense of community and stewardship.

In delivering its purposes, the Partnership Forum will:

- help relevant authorities to demonstrate their duty under Section 62(ii) of the Environment Act 1995: *“In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes of the National Park[.]”*<sup>3</sup>
- contribute to the national well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016
- assist public authorities to comply with Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2015 (the biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty), which requires public authorities to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions
- work collaboratively, inclusively and transparently, and observe the five ways of working outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

### **(iii) Membership**

The Partnership Forum will be made up of partners and representative bodies that make diverse contributions to delivering the Partnership Plan.

The Partnership Forum may invite additional organisations for specific expertise or advisory roles where needed.

It is for each partner organisation to determine who is best placed to represent them on the Partnership Forum. Considerations should include:

- the functions of the Partnership Forum as set out above
- availability to attend meetings
- knowledge and capacity to speak on behalf of their organisation or membership
- ability to communicate information about the Partnership Forum’s work more widely within their own organisation or membership
- ability to coordinate views from across their organisation or membership to provide a consensus view or position on relevant issues
- ability to coordinate the timely provision of relevant monitoring information from their organisation or membership

Members will be invited to declare any interests in respect of Partnership Forum business and will be expected to recuse themselves from matters where a conflict may exist.

### **(iv) Administration**

The Partnership Forum will be supported by officers of the National Park Authority, led by the Chief Executive of the National Park Authority.

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<sup>3</sup> A “relevant authority” is defined in the Act as any Minister of the Crown, any public body, any statutory undertaker, or any person holding public office. A “public body” includes any local authority, joint board or joint committee. The duty ‘to have regard’ includes observance of the Sandford principle, i.e. of the primacy of the first purposes in cases of apparent conflict between first and second purposes.

The Chair of the Partnership Forum will be appointed from Partnership Forum members.

The Partnership Forum will meet up to four times a year. Meetings may be physical and / or virtual, depending on needs and circumstances. Extraordinary meetings or written procedure may be employed as necessary.

Officers of the National Park Authority will:

- schedule and convene meetings
- prepare agendas, documents and minutes
- manage communications and attendance

Webpage(s) hosted by the National Park Authority will contain all relevant public documents and updates for Partnership Forum members.

#### **(v) Budget**

The Partnership Forum has no budget associated with it. However, The Partnership may propose project ideas that can be considered by relevant partners, including the National Park Authority, in line with their own remits, capacity and procedures.

#### **(vi) Reporting**

- Partnership Forum outputs will be reported to National Park Authority Members via an appropriate Committee
- Partnership Forum members are encouraged to disseminate information and encourage scrutiny within their networks.
- review of the Partnership Forum will take place after the first year of operation and in the year following the adoption of a renewed Partnership Plan by the National Park Authority. The Forum's effectiveness will also be reviewed as part of the annual Partnership Monitoring Framework report presented to the National Park Authority, and Management Team's review of an associated Partnership Monitoring matrix.

#### **(vii) Accountability and Reporting**

Through its statutory responsibilities<sup>4</sup>, the National Park Authority will maintain responsibility for the production of the Partnership Plan. This includes approving the review process for the Plan and approving / adopting consultation and final Plan documents.

Through its strategic oversight and Forum members' expertise the Partnership Forum will play a key role in review of the Partnership Plan. However the Partnership Forum will have no formal responsibility delegated by National Park Authority.

Any reports or plans developed by the Partnership Forum that require formal approval from the National Park Authority will be taken to Authority Members by the relevant Authority officer.

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<sup>4</sup> Section 66(1) of the Environment Act 1995