

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

SUBJECT:
DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR 2015/16

The Annual Governance Statement provides the vehicle for demonstrating the Authority's success in delivering continuous improvement in performance identifies control systems and processes and highlights significant governance issues to be addressed. This is an opportunity for members to contribute to and discuss the content of the Draft Annual Governance Statement for 2015/16.

The preparation of the draft statement involves consideration of information from a number of sources including; the Authority's risk register, the Cipfa assessment framework, the Internal Audit Report from Pembrokeshire County Council, and the Annual Improvement Report and Financial Audit Report from the Wales Audit Office. Members are asked to review the draft Statement and to make suggestions on additional issues to be included in the Statement.

.Recommendation: Members are asked to NOTE and COMMENT on this report

Background Documents

Draft Annual Governance Statement 2015/16

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2015/16 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

I. Introduction

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (“the Authority”) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. It is a Welsh improvement authority under section 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and as such has a general duty under section 2 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised. The Authority is also a public body as defined under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act legislative requirement for 1st April 2016.

In 2010/11 the Authority approved a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/ SOLACE Framework ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government’. This guidance recommends that the review of effectiveness of the system of internal control that local authorities are required to undertake in accordance with the Accounting and Audit Regulations should be reported in an Annual Governance Statement. In Wales the inclusion of the Annual Governance Statement in the Statement of Accounts is voluntary. In 2009/10 CIPFA also published an “Application Note to Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: A Framework”. This note has been developed to advise on the application of the “Statement of the Role of the Chief Financial Officer on Local Government” under the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government”. The Authority reviews and adopts any additional guidance as issued and has decided to adopt the CIPFA framework and Annual Governance Statement approach for 2015/16

II. The purpose of the Governance framework

The governance framework comprises the committees, systems and processes, cultures and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts 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 system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Authority’s policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

III. The Governance framework

There is clear definition of the roles of Members and Officer and a clear committee and decision making structure. This is based on:

The Authority

The Authority comprises 18 members and will meet at least 6 times a year and its main functions are:

- To approve the development of the Authority's strategic corporate planning framework through the National Park Management Plan (every five years), the Local Development Plan (every five years), and the Business and Improvement Plan (annually).
- To determine all policy matters in support of its strategic planning objectives. The Authority may receive advice from its committees and may also set up task and finish advisory groups to investigate and advise on specific matters.
- To determine all Service Standards and the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme.
- To agree policies relating to the management of the Authority's resources i.e. finance, staffing and assets; and to approve the budget, levy, charges, and the Annual Accounts.
- To ensure that the NPA complies with all legislation affecting its services.
- To determine membership of other committees, task & finish groups, working groups and advisory groups, within the NPA, and their terms of reference, and the Authority's representation on external bodies and organisations.
- To determine the delegation of the Authority's responsibilities to other committees of the Authority and when appropriate to the Chief Executive.

Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee

The Committee will comprise 9 Members of the Authority to be selected and/or confirmed at the Annual General Meeting each year. The Role of the committee is to exercise the powers and duties of the Authority in relation to the following functions:

1. Regulatory Framework

- To monitor the Authority's performance against the National Park Management Plan
- To oversee the production of the Annual Governance Statement and to monitor the Authority's performance against the associated Action Plan
- To monitor the Authority's performance against the annual Strategic Grant Letter
- To monitor performance against the Welsh Government's Standards relating to the Welsh language
- To monitor performance against the Authority's adopted Service Standards

2. Audit Activity
 - To consider reports from the Wales Audit Office (e.g. the Annual Improvement Report, Annual Audit Letter) and to monitor the Authority's performance thereon
 - To consider reports from Internal Audit on the Authority's financial systems and controls
3. Finance
 - To consider quarterly reports on the Authority's financial performance and budgetary matters
 - To monitor the Authority's performance in relation to its Annual Statement of Accounts
4. Human Resources

To monitor the Authority's performance:

 - against its adopted HR policies
 - in relation to Health and Safety
5. Information Technology
 - To monitor the Authority's performance in relation to its Information Technology Strategy
6. Performance Management
 - To consider quarterly reports on the *Ffynnon* performance management system and to monitor the Authority's performance thereon
 - To review the Authority's Risk Register in terms of Audit and Corporate functions and make any recommendations to the National Park Authority to change levels of risk
 - To consider reports of the meetings of the Continuous Improvement Group
7. Communications
 - To monitor the Authority's performance in relation to Communications and Marketing
8. Other issues
 - To review any issue referred to it by the National Park Authority, any of its Committees or the Chief Executive Officer
 - To determine an Authority response on any proposals that affect the National Park or the Authority, its powers, duties, functions and responsibilities, particularly but not exclusively, from central, regional or local government, neighbouring authorities, partnerships and other external bodies where the proposals are relevant to the functions of the Committee and where the Chief Executive considers that such response should be determined by the Committee

Development Management Committee

The Development Management Committee is responsible for carrying out the Authority's statutory planning functions in relation to the determination of

applications, appeals and enforcement matters, and allied issues relating to development and the regulation of uses and activities.

The terms of reference of the Development Management Committee are:

- (a) Except where those powers and duties have been delegated by the Authority to one of its officers and subject to its decisions being in conformity with the Authority's approved statements and plans the Committee shall exercise, with power to act, all the powers and duties of the Authority relating to the consideration of planning, listed building and conservation area applications, notification schemes, tree preservation orders, the control of development and the enforcement of such control, and other consultation schemes where appropriate.
- (b) Where members resolve to take a decision, contrary to an officer's recommendation, which the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), the Director of Park Direction and Planning or Head of Development Management identifies as constituting a significant departure from an approved plan or policy of the Authority, or as otherwise having significant implications for the Authority, the decision shall be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.

If, ultimately, the Committee's decision is contrary to the officer recommendation, there shall be taken a full minuted record of Members' reasons for rejecting the officer recommendation, together with a recorded vote. (*Policy Committee, 10/97*)

- (c) To receive reports from time to time from the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) and other officers on the exercise of any functions relating to the control of development which may have been delegated to them.
- (d) To deal with all matters relating to the designation and administration of Conservation Areas. (*Policy Committee 10/97*)

Operational Review Committee

The Committee comprises 9 Members of the Authority, to be selected and/or confirmed at the Annual General Meeting each year. The Committee meet on a quarterly basis and considers reports to the Authority on its performance. The Role of the committee is:

1. To monitor performance and make recommendations to the National Park Authority in relation to the functions of:
 - Development Management
 - Park Direction
 - Park Delivery
 - Discovery

2. To review the Authority's Risk Register and make any recommendations to the National Park Authority to change levels of risk
3. To review the Authority's financial performance in relation to the functions of the services referred to in 1 above
4. To review any issue referred to it by the National Park Authority, any of its Committees or the Chief Executive Officer
5. To determine an Authority response on any proposals that affect the National Park or the Authority, its powers, duties, functions and responsibilities, particularly but not exclusively, from central, regional or local government, neighbouring authorities, partnerships and other external bodies where the proposals are relevant to the functions of the Committee and where the Chief Executive considers that such response should be determined by the Committee

Continuous Improvement Group

The Continuous Improvement Group consists of five members of the Authority including the CEO. The membership includes the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Authority along with the Chairmen of the two Performance Review Committees. The group have the power to invite attendance of other members or officers if the work programme indicates that their attendance or experience would add value to its work

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 Gateway Assure . The terms of reference for internal audit require that work is conducted in accordance with standards as set out in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government.. Gateway Assure provide an audit opinion which is reported to the Authority and act as the Chief Audit Executive.

External Audit

Wales Audit Office act as the Authority's external audit and make comments following their financial accounts and performance work and in the annual audit letter. They also express an opinion on the adequacy of internal audit work.

Section 151 Officer

In the Authority the Finance Manager also acts as the Section 151 Officer. The Authority complies with the CIPFA "Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government". The Finance Manager is also a member of the Authority's Core Management Team.

The Executive

An Executive structure for decision making for officers is based on a Senior Management Team, Core Management Team and a Leadership Team and a . The Core Management Team meets weekly while the Leadership Team meets once a month.

Principles of Governance

The review of the effectiveness of the Authority systems of governance is undertaken in accordance with the following 6 principles.

- Focusing on the Authority's purpose, on outcomes for the community including citizens and service users and creating and implementing a vision for the local area
- Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose, with clearly defined functions and roles.
- Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour
- Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk
- Developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective
- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

IV. Actions Taken During The Year

Previously identified Significant Governance Issues, the actions taken to tackle these issues and their evaluations are shown in the table below:

Governance Issues Identified	Actions proposed	Evaluation
Delays In Implementation of Document Management System	Review of potentially suitable systems in terms of functionality, cost and implementation.	Investigation identified possible connectivity problems with PCC system. Alternative systems being evaluated and costed.
The Impact of the Review of Designated Landscapes	Publication of the Review is expected in 2015 and the NPA will respond accordingly.	The Review of Designated Landscapes was not published by the Welsh Government until late Autumn 2015. Based on findings of review the Minister commissioned a further Future Landscapes study under the chairmanship of Lord Ellis Thomas. The Authority's Chairman and three senior officers are contributing to the study.
Reduction In National Park Authority Funding	Officers will continue to liaise with Welsh Government on the National Park Authority funding position.	The Authority was notified of a further 5% reduction in funding. Due to a number of efficiency savings and additional incomes the Authority has been able to balance its budget for 2016/17
The Impact of the Well-being of Future Generation Act	The NPA, in partnership with BBNPA & SNPA is working with WLGA as an Early Adopter.	Member & officer training undertaken. Corporate Plan

		prepared using Future Generations guidance.
The Removal of Grant Funding	This risk of the loss of other sources of grant funding will be closely monitored.	This is an ongoing issue but thus far no notifications of reduced grant funding have been received.
Information Governance	This was identified during the Internal Audit of 2014. A review of information management will take place to identify any changes required to current policies, procedures and responsibilities.	Change of IT Management personnel has limited progress on this.
Improvement of the management of Car Parks	After many years delay, the Off-Street Parking Order has been prepared by Pembrokeshire County Council and is expected to be confirmed by July. Discussions will be held with PCC to investigate whether PCC might assist in parking enforcement and other routine car park management activities.	PCC have undertaken enforcement during 2015 and discussions underway to develop this to include cash collection in 2016.
Cilrhedyn	Officers will consider all options regarding the future operations at the Cilrhedyn Centre	Negotiations with Coed Cymru and Tir Coed are progressing with a view to them taking over the operations of the site.

V. Review of Effectiveness

The Authority is responsible for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. This review is informed by the work of the Authority's, Members and its Committees, internal and external auditors, other review agencies (as appropriate) and senior managers who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment. The normal process of review has been impacted by the delay in the production of the Annual Improvement Report from the Wales Audit Office. The review is based on the six principles of the Code of Corporate Governance.

Principle 1.

Focusing on the Authority's purpose, on outcomes for the community including citizens and service users and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.

The Authority has been focusing on developing work to ensure that it is 'fit for Purpose' to meet the challenges of the future.

Review of Designated Landscapes

In April 2014 the Welsh Government announced its intention to undertake a Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales. The first part of this Review, which was undertaken from September 2014 to January 2015, focused on the benefits of creating one designation for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the need to review the Purposes of Designated Areas. The Authority worked with the other two Welsh National Park Authorities to submit joint advice and met with the Panel undertaking the Review to discuss the evidence. In January 2015 the first stage report was published and outlined six recommendations.

The final report of the Review was published in October 2014. The report included 69 recommendations. The Minister for Natural Resources received the report but made no statement or decisions regarding accepting the recommendations. Instead he set up a new programme called the Future Landscapes Wales programme, under the Chairmanship of Lord Ellis-Thomas AM to review and take forward the recommendations of the Review of Designated Landscapes.

Future Landscapes Wales Program

In November 2015, the Minister for Natural Resources announced the Future Landscapes Wales programme. This programme will take forward the recommendations of the Review of Designated Landscapes and produce a series of options for a future Minister to consider in relation to designated landscapes. The programme has a number of elements and currently one Member and three officers are participating in the programme. The programme will run until April 2016 and will consider:

- The Well-being Goals and what they mean for refreshing the vision and ambition for designated landscapes
- Catalysts for economic development – what it looks like if it's going to work
- Modern governance – improving the current settlement and a blueprint for the future that reconciles national and local accountability

- Innovation in resourcing – more than just a grant from government.
Harnessing resources to broaden the resource base; money and skills

While the Authority has received a token financial sum from the Welsh Government for its participation on the programme, the time requirement, in particular for the officers is significant. On a positive note, the programme provides an opportunity for the Authority to shape future options for its governance and operation.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act

The Authority has worked with WLGA as an Early Adopter and undertaken Member and officer training with Brecon Beacons and Snowdonia NPAs. The Corporate Plan for 2016/17 has been prepared to deliver against the seven Well-being Goals set by Welsh Government.

Demonstrating Strategic Leadership

The Authority's current National Park Management Plan (NPMP) 2015/19 was approved in 2014 and was developed following full consultation with partners, stakeholders and communities setting out policies and longer term objectives. Members agreed to extend the life of the existing NPMP while awaiting the new Policy Statement and further guidance from Welsh Government.

Annual Improvement Plan

The Authority sets out its improvement objectives and priority work activities for the forthcoming year. This document is developed in consultation with Members, staff and stakeholders.

Quality of Service

The Authority carries out surveys of the effectiveness of its service delivery through customer satisfactions surveys, performance against quality standards and by monitoring formal complaints which remain at a low level.

Ffynnon System

The Authority has continued to adopt the Ffynnon system to ensure that we develop and manage a robust system of performance information to highlight the impact of the work undertaken by the Authority. Performance review committee reports are prepared directly from Ffynnon.

Budget Pressures / Joint working

Work has continued to reduce costs and to identify options for joint working. Discussions are on-going with a number of other Authorities to identify efficient ways of delivering our services. In June 2014 the Authority was notified by Welsh Government of an in year cut to the National Park Grant for 2014/15. An early indication was this would be the region of £100k and budgets were managed accordingly. In early March 2015 the reduction was confirmed at circa £50k which together with a unexpected capital grant has less severe impact on the Authority finances.

Community Engagement

the Authority undertook an extensive consultation exercise in 2014 designed to help staff and members increase their understanding of the needs of a wide variety of

individuals, communities and stakeholders, including local businesses. The results of the consultations will be used to inform the future strategic direction of the Authority's work. The methodology involved collating questionnaire data via Survey Monkey, the County Show and Tenby Market, consulting with Friends of the National Park and holding five Community consultations event across Pembrokeshire.

Membership of Local Service Board

Local Service Boards (LSB) seek to deliver benefits for citizens through strengthening joint working across all public services in Wales. Despite having responsibility for delivering outcomes included in the Pembrokeshire Single Integrated Plan the Authority has not been represented on the Pembrokeshire LSB. During March 2015 the Authority received an invitation to become Members of the Pembrokeshire LSB. This will enhance the ability of the Authority to influence the delivery of public services in Pembrokeshire. In April 2016 the Pembrokeshire LSB will become the Pembrokeshire Public Service Board (PSB). The PSB will lead the development of the local well-being assessment and the Pembrokeshire Well-being Plan, which is likely to significantly impact the work of the Authority from 2017 onwards.

Principle 2

Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose, with clearly defined functions and roles.

Reduction in National Park Grant and Levy

The revenue budget for 2015/16 was approved in February 2015. While certain strategic savings had been agreed with members it was intended that the 2015/16 budget be balanced by a range of potential additional savings. During the 2015/16 financial year savings and additional income have been identified and the current end of year forecast position for 2015/16 is a surplus.

The Authority practice of holding Budget workshops following NPA's meeting has proven very helpful in developing the budget for 2015/ 16 and a medium term financial strategy and identifying areas for rationalisation. With a cut in core funding over 17% in the last three years continuation of the workshops will be essential if it is to successfully manage the anticipated budgetary challenges ahead.

Scrutiny Committee

Members and officers have been developing the scrutiny process, particularly through the National Parks joint scrutiny group on the economy held in conjunction with Snowdonia National Park Authority. The review is to enquire how successful National Park Authority policies and work are in supporting all small and medium sized enterprises businesses

Member and Officer Joint Training & Development

During the year Members & Officer undertook several joint training programmes which covered the following areas:

- Solar Array
- Flowers and Butterflies on the Llanion Meadow
- Sky Cam Wales – Drone demo at Carew Castle
- Sea levels and Shoreline Management.
- Rural Alliances

Consultations

Members have contributed their comments to responses to Welsh Government consultation papers including: Planning and the Welsh language' Draft Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Bill, Environment Impact Assessment (Agriculture) Regulations, ROWIP review: guidance to Local Highway Authorities in Wales, Proposed changes to the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014, Nature Recovery Plan for Wales, Draft Local Government (Wales), The public sector waste and resource efficiency plan, Improving opportunities to access the outdoors for responsible recreation, Welsh Government Draft Equality Objectives for 2016-2020.

Task and Finish Groups

The Authority set up three task and finish groups with members and officers to explore firstly managing the Authority's car parks, secondly the provision of visitor information and thirdly the provision of support services. The car park group reported back late in 2015 with a view to extending charging to current non charging car parks and increasing the rates which the Authority charge. The visitor information and support services group are due to report back later in 2016

Principle 3

Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.

A Code of Conduct for Members and a Code of Conduct for Officers is in place. Issues relating to breaking the Code of Conduct are dealt with by the following:

The Standards Committee

It is the responsibility of the Authority's Standards Committee to promote high standards of conduct by Members and Officers. It does this by advising on and promoting awareness and understanding of the code of conduct for Members and the code of conduct for officers, both of which are documented in the Authority's Constitution.

Monitoring Officer

The statutory Monitoring Officer functions set out in Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended) i.e., in short, to report to the Authority if the Monitoring Officer considers that any proposal, decision, or omission by the Authority may give rise to unlawfulness or maladministration. The Monitoring Officer provides an Annual Report of his work to both the Standards Committee and the National Park Authority.

Public Sector Ombudsman for Wales

The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales has jurisdiction over the Authority's functions by virtue of the Public Service Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005. He has not made any investigation into the Authority either in relation to any alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct adopted by the Authority on 25 June 2008. However there has been one investigation with regard the Authority's planning process. .

Staff Members

Issues relating to the conduct of staff are normally considered in accordance with the Authority's Disciplinary procedures, which are normally reviewed in accordance with the Human Resources Strategy. All Authority staff have annual and interim performance appraisals. This process allows an opportunity for managers and staff to review past performance, highlight potential areas of concern and agree future objectives to ensure they are linked to service plan/corporate targets.

Whistle Blowing Policy

In the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 the Government has given statutory protection to employees who 'blow the whistle' by speaking out against corruption and malpractice at work. It protects them against victimisation and dismissal. The Authority has approved and adopted such a policy in 2002 which was updated in 2009. In its commitment to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability, it says "The authority encourages employees and others with serious concerns about the Authority's work to come forward and raise their concerns with the Authority". This was reviewed in November 2013 by the Monitoring Officer who was of the view no amendments were required; the document is in the public domain.

Safeguarding Policy

In August 2014 the Authority approved a safeguarding policy. The policy aims to ensure that sound working practices are in place that put safeguarding as a priority and which are effective in managing risk for these vulnerable groups, but which will also protect staff and volunteers against wrongful or malicious allegations.

Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy

The Authority approved an Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy in 2015. Policy covers all employees, volunteers and members of the Authority. This document replaced the previous Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy and incorporates the changes to the bribery legislation that have been included in the Bribery Act 2010. The Bribery Act 2010 establishes criminal offences and individuals found guilty can face an unlimited fine and imprisonment up to ten years. Where an organisation itself is found guilty of the offence then the penalty is an unlimited fine.

Financial Standards

In February 2016 the Authority revised its Financial Standards. The purpose of the Financial Standards is to provide a financial framework within which the Authority can operate. This will assist the Authority in ensuring that:

- Legislation is complied with.
- The assets of the Authority are safeguarded.
- The funds available are spent wisely and efficiently.
- Appropriate income generation is undertaken.
- Best value is achieved

Principle 4

Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.

The Authority has taken the following action to improve its processes and structures and also to tackle identified issues of risk.

Scrutiny Project

The scrutiny exercise on our work to support the local economy was run in partnership with Snowdonia National Park Authority concluded its findings in July 2016 and formally reported back to the Authority in February 2016 .

Risk Management

Following recommendation by Internal Audit the Risk Register is now presented to each meeting of both the Audit & Corporate Services and Operational Review Committees and annually to the full Authority. It is a standing agenda item on the monthly Leadership Team meetings when current risks are reviewed and new risks evaluated.

Performance Management

Staff are updating the Ffynnon system directly with information to update performance reporting. However following the withdrawal of financial support by Welsh Government, the continuing use of Ffynnon beyond 2015/16 is in doubt and may depend on agreement of all three Welsh National Park Authorities.

Upgrading systems infrastructure

During 2015/16 the Authority made further investments in its IT systems, with upgrades to the planning system and the introduction of an EPOS module linked to the tills in each centre. Further upgrades to servers and the wide area network were introduced to improve disaster recovery.

Internal Audit 2015/16

As part of the Authority's corporate governance programme a risk assessment was made on all its services and formed the basis of the work carried out during 2015/16 by the Authority's internal auditors' Gateway Assure. The focus of the Audit was on the following areas:

- Review of Previous Year Agreed Action Plan
- Risk Management
- Key Financial Controls – Budgetary Control
- Health & Safety
- Corporate Governance
- Departmental Review – Income Generation

The Chief Audit Executive's opinion, ...*(The Audit opinion will be provided by Gateway Assure for inclusion in the final report within the next few months)*...

Committees

Individual service team leaders update Members of their respective Review Committee with details of the work in progress within the team. There is a clear documenting of decisions, meeting agenda and minute process. Members therefore make decisions based on timely and accurate information, although some decisions are deferred to allow members for considered decisions

Wales Audit Office Reports

Wales Audit Office passes an opinion on their review the Authority's performance and Statements of Accounts which is recorded in the WAO Improvement Assessment Letter and the ISA 260 report. The Wales Audit Office 2013/14 Annual Improvement Report was not available in 2014/15 to action any recommendations.

Planning Audit

A review of the Planning Service was carried out by Wales Audit Office with the final report, "Delivering More With Less", published in October 2015 and a formal presentation by WAO to the Authority in February 2016 endorsed the progress made by the service. The report recommended increasing partnership and joint working with other planning authorities and WLGA, setting further service objectives, investigating opportunities for additional income. Work on these recommendations was underway prior to the publication of the report.

Principle 5

Developing the capacity and capability of Members and Officers to be effective.

The Authority has undertaken the following to develop the capacity and capability of Members:

Wales Charter for Member Support and Development

The Authority currently holds Charter status for Member Support & Development

Staff Development

Learning and development needs are identified at annual performance reviews and priority 1 needs form the basis of the plans for the year. All new staff are 'inducted' on an individual basis when they start, with an annual corporate induction with the CE and Directors, and the opportunity to attend an all-UK National Park event. Appropriate certificated training is identified and scheduled with periodic refreshers.

In 2015-16, the 3-year SLA with PCC delivered an autumn/winter programme of learning opportunities for leadership team and team leaders, plus some coaching. Relevant managers also undertook an Equality Impact Assessment workshop.

A regular programme of lunchtime training and awareness events takes place.

A training programme with the West Wales Action on Mental Health team is ongoing, including for team leaders in their role as people managers. Over 50 staff took part in sessions introducing Mindfulness as an aid to wellbeing.

Health and Safety

There was an internal audit of Health and Safety during 2015/16 with a substantial assurance. Members received a comprehensive annual report in November 2015 and endorsed a set of priorities and actions. An HSE inspection took place following a RIDDOR report of a work related health condition. Three team leaders have successfully completed a 4-day IOSH accredited 'Managing Safely' course and all managers have taken part in a workshop to refresh management understanding of manual handling.

Principle 6

Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

During the past year the Authority has sought to engage with local people and stakeholders through a range of consultations. Following last year's survey of community councils training sessions on planning have been provided to all who requested it.

The Authority proposes to undertake extensive consultation with residents, visitors, organisations and other stakeholders on a long term strategy on service delivery on the reducing funding anticipated over the next few years.

Strategic Equality Plan

The Authority joined a consortium of most of the public bodies in south west Wales to undertake a major equalities perception survey which was managed by Carmarthenshire County Council. The results of the survey are being considered during the review of the Authority's Strategic Equality Plan.

Partnership working arrangements

The Authority works with a number of external bodies helping to improve value for money and in communicating with various other interest groups to deliver a number of common projects, e.g.:

- Carmarthenshire County Council; SLA's Payroll / Pension. Minerals
- South Wales Local Authority Purchasing Group; Legal Services Provision
- Brecon Beacons & Snowdonia National Parks Authorities, brokerage Insurance / joint IT manager and Mosaic project Community Consultation; there has been significant engagement with Town and Community Councils on the changes in Planning guidance and on Budget priorities for the Authority.

- Future Landscapes Wales programme
- Local Service Board's and it's subgroups
- Apprenticeship scheme with Brecon Beacons National Park and Torfaen Borough Council

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VI. Significant Governance Issues

Governance Issues Identified	Action to be taken
Document Management Systems	Review alternative systems
Impact of Future Landscapes Program	Work with partners to seek to influence the outcome of the program
National Park Grant Funding	Continue to work with Welsh Government to respond to funding position and developing a medium term financial plan
Continuity Planning following experienced leaving the Authority	Monitor staff workloads and ensure Authority is run as effectively as possible

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VII. OPINION

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the matters referred to in part IV to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

SIGNED _____
Chairman

DATED _____

SIGNED _____
Chief Executive

DATE _____

SIGNED _____
Section 151 Officer

DATE _____

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