

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT:
PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE YEAR 2011/12

Introduction

The terms of reference for this committee as approved by the NPA are as follows – to look at corporate risks, governance and issues relating to the work of the Chief Executive Officer and departments reporting to him such as HR, Finance, IT, Communications, performance management. In addition, this Committee will look at performance against the Welsh Assembly Government’s Strategic Grant letter;

Corporate Strategy

The new Corporate Strategy sets out the eight corporate outcomes for 2011/12 as follows

Corporate Outcome	Lead Officer
1 - The National Park is conserved for current and future generations	JG
2 - Residents and visitors enjoy and appreciate the National Park	JP
3 - Residents and visitors use opportunities provided to adopt more sustainable lifestyles	MR
4 - Opportunities are provided for local people to live within the National Park	MD
5 - A thriving local economy exists based on the sustainable use of the National Park.	RG
6 - Residents and Visitors from a wide range of backgrounds access opportunities for improved understanding about the National Park.	EJ
7 - Residents and visitors recognise the distinct Pembrokeshire cultures within the National Park	TJ
8 - The Authority is recognised as meeting good practice standards in terms of governance, providing value for money and listening to the views of residents, visitors and partners	AH

This committee will obviously concentrate on outcome 8, with the Conservation and Planning Review Committee overseeing outcomes 1, 3 and 4, while the Recreation and Tourism Review Committee will oversee outcomes 2 and 6. As the lead officers for outcomes 5 and 7 sit within the Authority’s corporate services it is proposed that these outcomes should also be monitored by this committee.

The actions outlined in the strategy for this outcome and the progress to date is as follows.

Action	Progress
a. Improve the response times for pre-application enquiries	Development planning section is now also dealing with pre app enquires with approximately 66% of applications replied to within 21 days.
b. Develop methodology to measure the quality and added value of the planning service	Initial draft prepared, further consideration required before consulting with BBNPA and SNPA.
c. Develop State of the Park monitoring methodology	Integrated within review of National Park Management Plan.
d. Continue to implement efficiency savings, joint working, benchmarking and sharing experiences	Continuous – Examples - revised cleaning contract has saved £4,000 pa. Insurance renewal saving c £20,000. Changes to NPA web site hosting saving £2,000. Staff retirements and restructuring underway.
e. Improve performance management	Ffynnon system being implemented based on corporate strategy
f. Develop the scrutiny role of Members	Scrutiny project with Brecon well underway with pilot scrutiny topic in progress
g. Work towards advance charter for Members	Criteria agreed with WLGA, members' development programme in place
h. Interim review of National Park Plan and develop a methodology for state of the park reporting by 2012/13	Draft report scheduled by end of 2011.

Strategic Grant Letter

The full grant letter and priority objectives for 2011/12 are attached as an appendix. The grant letter objectives are in many cases already integrated within the corporate strategy actions. A summary of progress is as follows

Priority Objectives 2011/12	Lead Officer	Progress
Governance:		
To operate effectively and efficiently and to report on the value of permanent savings and efficiencies secured.	AH	Reduction in head count and other savings totalling over £26,000 this

		year to date excl staff cost savings.
Natural beauty:		
Become exemplars on how to integrate biodiversity mitigation, compensation and enhancement into new developments through the planning system, and demonstrate how you are supporting others to effectively use the planning system to safeguard biodiversity.	JG	Advice obtained from West Wales Biodiversity Recording Centre on key sites. Additional conditions to be introduced in sensitive developments
To report on priorities and activities to promote and safeguard the cultural heritage of the Parks.	JG	Many activities already underway through archaeology, historic buildings, activities and events and Oriel y Parc
To develop a robust approach to monitoring the state of the Park.	MR	Included in review of NPMP due by Dec 2011
Enjoyment and understanding:		
Demonstrate that recreation planning and delivery in National Parks supports outdoor recreation opportunities in ways which promote enjoyment of the Parks' special qualities, protect the environment, and deliver an economic benefit.	CM	Recreation Strategy approved by NPA
To utilise the special qualities of the Parks in contributing to life-long learning, and in particular to support opportunities for schools within the Parks to access learning opportunities outside the classroom.	EJ	Increased demand for schools programme. 3 Discovery Rangers delivering outdoor opportunities for children and difficult to reach groups.
To collaborate with each other and local partners to develop indicators of the impact of tourism and to raise awareness of the special qualities of National Parks with visitors and the tourism sector.	CM	Some initial discussions with Pembrokeshire Tourism & PCC. New joint annual survey agreed. Some indicators being developed by BBNP
Sustainable communities:		
To demonstrate how plans and programmes contribute to supporting the social and economic well-being of the Park's local communities.	RG	Review of plans scheduled for 3 rd quarter
To make provision to enable affordable housing , and to collaborate with the local housing authority/ies on delivery of affordable housing targets.	MD	Local Development Plan policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance in place.

Provide for meaningful participation by children and young people, and other protected groups, in the activities of the Park Authorities.	EJ	Variety of activities scheduled using Discovery Rangers and other staff
Climate change:		
To collaborate with each other, neighbouring authorities and regional and local partnerships to meet national targets on carbon reduction.	PR	Working with National Trust and Carbon Trust to develop improve efficiency of the NPA buildings. Supplementary planning Guidance has resulted in conditions for carbon reduction measures on household improvement applications
Share resources and skills to explore the feasibility of developing renewable energy projects on National Park Authority land in Wales, with a view to coordinating investment across the three National Park Authorities.	AH	Initial exchange of ideas underway.
Demonstrate that the Park Authority is working to identify the risks posed by climate change and is informing the action being taken to adapt and mitigate through land management.	MR	Biodiversity connectivity map commissioned to provide the basis for future land management projects.
To continue to deliver, support, and champion sustainable transport provision within and around the Parks for the benefit of visitors and local communities.	SM	PCNPA budget maintained for Greenways transport schemes, improved cycle ways and multi-user paths being developed with PCC.
Planning:		
As a key statutory strategic framework for delivering priorities, each Park to have an adopted Local Development Plan in place in line with each Authority's agreed Delivery Agreement timetable, and once adopted to monitor and report on progress in implementing plan policies.	MD	Completed, monitoring commencing this year.
To demonstrate that each Park is building on improvements in performance made in development management since the Wales Audit Office Parks Review of 2009; in particular to determine planning	VH	Staff recruitment underway to replace recent retirements. Consultants used to help cover temporary staff shortage. Performance

applications to agreed timetables, reduce the backlog of planning applications, and take action as necessary on the number of planning cases where enforcement action is undertaken.		has reduced during period of staff retirements.
Explore, pursue, and report on opportunities for joint working between the Parks and with neighbouring planning authorities, where this enables improvements in the delivery of the planning service.	TJ	Joint training and joint preparation of SPG; discussions underway on building control, sharing expertise etc with PCC.

Risk Register

The risk register is being reviewed in detail in preparation for recording in the Ffynnon system but the main risks remain around possible funding reductions in the next budget settlement from the Welsh Government. Other areas of concern are the uncertainty over the development at Carew Castle and the impact of changes in the Government's policies to fund community renewable projects which may result in some SDF projects not proceeding. Discussions with the Cadw, the landlord and the National Trust over the plans at Carew are well underway and the results will be reported to the NPA in due course. Previous concerns over the financial risk at Oriel y Parc are reducing with the café now operated by a private individual removing the risk of financial loss. With the new manager now in post the staffing levels have been reviewed and operating costs closely monitored. Merchandise sales are increasing and involvement with schools and the local community has also increased.

Ffynnon

Over 20 staff have had introductory training on the Ffynnon system with a number starting to use the system to record data. A presentation of Ffynnon will be made at the meeting.

(For further information contact Alan Hare – Head of Business Management on ext 4810)

Jane Davidson AC/AM

Y Gweinidog dros yr Amgylchedd, Cynaliadwyedd a Thai
Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

To : The Chairs of the 3
National Park Authorities

March 2011

Strategic Grant Letter 2011 - 2012

My officials have already advised you of the resources being made available by the Assembly Government in support of your work in 2011 – 2012 – details at Annex 1. The purpose of this letter is to highlight the priority areas on which the Assembly Government would wish to see these resources being targeted in the year ahead.

The National Park Authorities (NPAs) have made a useful contribution to the Welsh Assembly Government's strategic agenda for 2007-2011 **One Wales: A Progressive Agenda for the Government of Wales**. The NPAs must continue to support its core commitments for a strong and confident nation, a healthy future, a prosperous society, living communities, learning for life, a fair and just society, a sustainable environment, and a rich and diverse culture.

I recognise the role that your organisations play in contributing to the wellbeing of the people of Wales over the longer-term. The National Park Authorities have signed the Assembly Government's **Sustainable Development Charter**, committing you to making sustainable development your central organising principle. You should ensure that the decisions that you take as an organisation on the policies, programmes and projects that you undertake are taken within the SD decision-making framework so they consider economic, social and environmental impacts and well being over the longer-term and manage any conflicts between these in a way that is consistent with SD principles.

"A Living Wales" will provide for a new approach to managing the Welsh environment, countryside and seas. This will mean a much more integrated approach to managing eco-systems within Wales, with a focus on sustainable development. Further work is being undertaken on the option of establishing a single environmental body for Wales. This work will take account of all considerations including financial and policy issues and will also look at the exact purpose and functions of a single environmental body. If a decision is taken to progress this option the NPAs should ensure that they are fully engaged with the development stages.

The **National Parks Policy Statement** will be reviewed in 2011, and will need to reflect the new approach to be developed under “A Living Wales” and also the strategic agenda to be set down by the Assembly Government following the election this coming May. It is the intention that the Statement will set out the Welsh Assembly Government’s medium term policy agenda for the three National Park Authorities to pursue, and will provide an opportunity to refresh the governance relationship between the Assembly Government and the NPAs.

The **Climate Change Strategy for Wales** sets out how the Assembly Government, its partners, and the people of Wales can deliver our ambitious target of an annual 3% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and ensure that effective action to adapt to the impacts of climate change is taken. I am pleased with the progress that the Park Authorities have already made in reducing their own emissions. I now expect you to be leading the way on developing and informing approaches to adaptation and mitigation of climate change through land use management, and in supporting community activity to address both the causes and consequences of climate change.

Planning has a key role in delivering sustainable development, supporting the needs of the economy and local communities, whilst safeguarding and enhancing the environment. Our development priorities for rural areas are set out in **Planning Policy Wales** (Edition 4, February 2011) and Technical Advice Note 6 (TAN 6) – **Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities**. The work of the NPAs should contribute by securing:

- sustainable rural communities with access to affordable housing and high quality public services;
- a thriving and diverse local economy where agriculture related activities are complemented by sustainable tourism and other forms of employment in a working countryside in the twenty first century; and
- an attractive, ecologically rich and accessible countryside in which the environment and biodiversity are conserved and enhanced.

Taking forward and improving the delivery of your planning services requires having an up-to-date adopted local development plan in place providing the framework for land use planning across your authority, including planning for affordable housing and supporting biodiversity, along with a development management service that is fair, open, effective and efficient when dealing with individual developments.

In managing with a reduced then standstill financial settlement it is imperative that the Park Authorities do not undo the good work they have done in recent years to improve and promote access opportunities, in particular for those who have traditionally made disproportionately less use of the Parks. I have made it clear to you that the sustainable public transport and educational services that you provide should be maintained, and that there should be renewed emphasis on making meaningful contact with local communities during difficult times. I also expect the Park Authorities to continue to take forward in their areas relevant aspects of the Assembly Government’s **Walking and Cycling Action Plan**, including working with the local highway authorities on delivery of priorities within the local **Rights of Way Improvement Plans**.

Reflecting the above strategic issues, I have identified in Annex 2 of this letter the priority objectives which I want the Park Authorities to focus on delivering in 2011-2012. In line with the current arrangements, I expect you to arrange for the Assembly Government to receive brief six monthly reports on progress this autumn and again in the spring of 2012. These can then be used as the basis for your regular 6 monthly review meetings with the new Minister, following the election in May.

Jane Davidson AM

Y Gweinidog dros yr Amgylchedd, Cynaliadwyedd a Thai

Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

National Park Grant from the Welsh Assembly Government

Snowdonia National Park Authority - £4,316,400 (£6,080,299 with the levy, the Sustainable Development Fund and additional capital funding)

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority – £3,368,100 (£4,815,899 with the levy, the Sustainable Development Fund and additional capital funding)

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority - £3,215,500 (£4,612,432 with the levy, the Sustainable Development Fund and additional capital funding)

Priority Objectives 2011/12

Governance:

1. To **operate effectively and efficiently** and to report on the value of permanent savings and efficiencies secured.

Natural beauty:

2. Become exemplars on how to integrate **biodiversity** mitigation, compensation and enhancement into new developments through the planning system, and demonstrate how you are supporting others to effectively use the planning system to safeguard biodiversity.
3. To report on priorities and activities to promote and safeguard the **cultural heritage** of the Parks.
4. To develop a robust approach to **monitoring** the state of the Park.

Enjoyment and understanding:

5. Demonstrate that recreation planning and delivery in National Parks supports **outdoor recreation** opportunities in ways which promote enjoyment of the Parks' special qualities, protect the environment, and deliver an economic benefit.
6. To utilise the special qualities of the Parks in contributing to **life-long learning**, and in particular to support opportunities for schools within the Parks to access learning opportunities outside the classroom.
7. To collaborate with each other and local partners to develop indicators of the impact of **tourism** and to raise awareness of the special qualities of National Parks with visitors and the tourism sector.

Sustainable communities:

8. To demonstrate how plans and programmes contribute to supporting the **social and economic well-being** of the Park's local communities.
9. To make provision to enable **affordable housing**, and to collaborate with the local housing authority/ies on delivery of affordable housing targets.
10. Provide for meaningful **participation** by children and young people, and other protected groups, in the activities of the Park Authorities.

Climate change:

11. To collaborate with each other, neighbouring authorities and regional and local partnerships to meet national targets on **carbon reduction**.
12. Share resources and skills to explore the feasibility of developing **renewable energy** projects on National Park Authority land in Wales, with a view to coordinating investment across the three National Park Authorities.
13. Demonstrate that the Park Authority is working to identify the risks posed by climate change and is informing the action being taken to **adapt and mitigate** through land management.
14. To continue to deliver, support, and champion **sustainable transport** provision within and around the Parks for the benefit of visitors and local communities.

Planning:

15. As a key statutory strategic framework for delivering priorities, each Park to have an adopted **Local Development Plan** in place in line with each Authority's agreed Delivery Agreement timetable, and once adopted to monitor and report on progress in implementing plan policies.
16. To demonstrate that each Park is building on improvements in performance made in **development management** since the Wales Audit Office Parks Review of 2009; in

particular to determine planning applications to agreed timetables, reduce the backlog of planning applications, and take action as necessary on the number of planning cases where enforcement action is undertaken.

17. Explore, pursue, and report on opportunities for **joint working** between the Parks and with neighbouring planning authorities, where this enables improvements in the delivery of the planning service.