

REPORT OF DISCOVERY TEAM

SUBJECT: PATHWAYS PROJECT – REVIEW AFTER 1 YEAR DELIVERY

Purpose of Report

To provide an update to Members on the Pathways Project

Introduction/Background

Pathways is one year into this three year project funded by the Welsh Government.. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act was a major influence in project planning and design. Project activity focuses upon the health, wellbeing and developmental benefits offered by the outdoors, and is divided into two work areas; providing supported practical volunteering sessions for individuals, and developing the capacity of other organisations to access the benefits regular use of the outdoors offers their clients (continuing the work of PCNPA's 'Your Park' project).

The individual volunteering group provides opportunities both for participation in practical conservation and access work, and also as 'activity leaders' who work in a more supportive role alongside others to help them complete tasks. 64 people have attended as individual volunteers,. Work has taken place on 68 Tuesday and Thursday sessions and 14 weekend days.

The project targets those who are new to volunteering and have barriers to engaging in regular activity outdoors – particularly younger and older people and those experiencing mental health issues. Individuals may volunteer themselves, be referred to the project or developed from participating groups.

Practical tasks have taken place both at venues in the National Park and sites closer to urban areas, being sourced from Warden Teams as well as partner organisations. Work is generally led by the Pathways project officer, sometimes alongside Rangers or partner organisation staff.

6 groups have been engaged in the organisational development side of Pathways, and have seen more regular and diverse activities led by their own staff and an associated increase in the use of the outdoors for better outcomes.

Training provision is a key element of the project and has included sessions for individual volunteers to develop their skills and motivation, and sessions for those looking to develop their abilities to lead others outdoors. Additionally sessions have been held to inspire and motivate continued involvement- including trips to Castlemartin Range and Skomer.

There is a strong focus on evaluation to capture the impact that participation has – through daily review and documenting longer term outcomes using emerging 'Most Significant Change' methodology now adopted county-wide - 'Preventions and Outcomes' Programme.

Challenges remain in recruitment and developing provision for the diverse needs of participating individuals and organisations, particularly around ensuring sufficient 'activity leaders' to support other volunteers on every session. Meeting challenges presented by our rurality is as ever a challenge, as well as working effectively with other organisations in a time of reducing resource.

Comparisons

Many examples of 'traditional' volunteering schemes (including other PCNPA, National Trust, Friends of the PCNPA etc) exist. 'The (British) Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV / TCV) has run an inclusive volunteering scheme for some 50 years, though not in West Wales. The Princes Trust TEAM programme is in some ways a comparable volunteering scheme run for Young People. However none really offer the breadth and scope of practical volunteering seen in Pathways.

Financial considerations

Current cost to the Authority is zero as covered by £250k WG funding until 2020, before when consideration of alternative funding by the Authority may be desirable.

Risk considerations

No significant risks associated with the project, compliant with standard PCNPA Health and Safety and makes a positive contribution to the reputation of the organisation.

Compliance

The project supports the NPA's duty to 'foster the social and economic well-being of local communities'. Pathways is a strong demonstration of the Authorities work towards WG directives, WFGA, SSA etc

Human Rights/Equality issues

Pathways supports PCNPA Equality plan, and is a strong demonstration of the Authorities commitment to Equality and Diversity etc.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

Pathways volunteers make a significant contribution to the conservation and access work of the National Park and is run as sustainably as possible. Provides extra capacity in supporting biodiversity – e.g. hedge-laying increasing connectivity etc.

Welsh Language statement

Currently Welsh provision not demanded by participants although this is in Project Plan as future development of the project.

Conclusion

Pathways is one third through its funded period and has a solid base on which to build through subsequent years. Challenges remain to be overcome in developing project. Pathways focuses on putting people at the centre and giving them benefit.

Recommendation

Receive report and note for future consideration.

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