

**REPORT OF NEWPORT VISITOR CENTRE MANAGER**

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**SUBJECT: NEWPORT VISITOR CENTRE**

Purpose of Report

This report reviews recent progress at Newport Visitor Centre from an operational perspective.

Introduction/Background

Newport Visitor Centre is situated in Long Street opposite the main car park. Originally the building was two adjoining cottages which were re-furnished in 2009 to create the single visitor centre building. The public section of the building is divided into three distinct areas comprising of a retail section, interpretation section and an information section. To the rear of the public section there is a staff kitchen and a toilet as well as a small satellite office for the use of National Park Officers from the North Area Warden Team, the North Area Rangers, National Park Planners and the Farm Conservation Officer.

There is a small meeting room (capacity approximately 15 to 20 people) to the left of the public area which is used by the National Park Planning Section for meetings as well as by local societies and groups. To the rear of the building is a small garden.

As well as providing information for visitors and residents to North Pembrokeshire and the National Park the centre provides a bed booking service as formally recognised TIC.

Community

The Visitor Centre has close links with many local community groups. The Newport Environmental Group regularly uses the centre for meetings as do local political groups. The Town Council Planning Committee meets once a month at the centre. There are close links with the Newport Tennis Club as members have to pick up the keys to the tennis courts and make their payments at the centre. One of the staff is a member of the *Walkers are Welcome* committee as well as the Newport Chamber of Trade. It is hoped that centre staff can work with more groups in the future in order to maximise the use of the meeting room and centre as a key community asset. A mobility scooter is also now available at the centre for the use of locals and visitors with mobility problems.

Visitor Numbers

Comparison figures for visitor throughput in the last two years show that despite the economic downturn the number of people visiting the centre is on the up. There were 28,537 visitors in 2012 compared with 25,675 in 2011, an increase of 10.03%.

Staffing

There is a very small team of dedicated staff at the centre. The centre is open six days a week from Easter to the end of October with two members of staff employed

for the duration of the season. A third staff member supplements the team during the busier peaks of Easter, May Half-Term and the six week summer period. The centre operates at a reduced level of opening - Monday, Wednesday and Friday (10.30am to 3.30pm) and Saturday mornings (10.30am to 1.30pm) during the winter months and is manned by one member of the team.

### Comparisons

The centre attracts around 28,000 visitors which is comparable with Tourist Information Centre facilities at Fishguard Harbour and Newquay.

### Financial considerations

The running costs of the centre are relatively low with the net cost being circa £18,284. This works out at a cost of £0.71 per visitor, the lowest net cost figure of all of the PCNPA's visitor facilities.

#### - Income

The total annual income for 2012 has remained roughly the same as for 2011 (£22,273.56 in 2011 compared with £22,295.64 in 2012) however the spend per person has fallen from £0.87 in 2011 to £0.78 last year, a fall of 10.34% due predominantly to the economic climate.

#### - Internal Audit 2011/12

An Internal Audit of the centre was carried out in 2011. On the whole the audit report stated that financial controls at the centre were satisfactory although there were a small number of areas where there was scope for improvement. These included inconsistencies with other PCNPA centres regarding hours credited for a full day's work and the need for documented procedures and an inventory to be drawn up. All these issues have now been addressed and new systems and procedures are in place.

#### - Maintenance

The maintenance of the centre is low. An issue with rising damp has now been dealt with. However the exterior walls had to be re-painted as the original paint work flaked off leaving unsightly patches. Electricity and heating is partially provided by solar panels situated on the roof to the rear of the building. This is proving to be very efficient.

### Welsh Language Statement

A bilingual policy is operated at the centre with all information, signs, labels etc in both English and Welsh.

### Conclusion

The Newport Visitor Centre has been an integral part of the town for many years and continues to offer a very good service to visitors and locals alike. The relatively low cost of running the Centre does not put financial pressure on the Authority. It is also advantageous to have an office base in the North of the County for the use of Officers who are based in the area.

### Human Rights/Equality issues

None

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

There are no issues at present

**Recommendation:**

**Members are asked to NOTE the Report.**

*Author: Rhonwen Owen*