

ORIEL Y PARC COMMITTEE

27th October 2010

Present: Councillor SL Hancock (Chair)
Messrs D Ellis, HM George, RM Lewis, PJ Morgan, WL Raymond and M Williams.

In Attendance: Ms B Dawkes (Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales), Mr A Hare, Mr T Jones, Mr J Parkin and Mrs J Rogers.

(Discovery Room, Oriel y Parc, St Davids: 10.30am – 1.00pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs G Hayward and Mr R Howells

2. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed Ms Bryony Dawkes, the Partnerships Projects Curator for Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales to the meeting and thanked her for attending.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 14th July 2010 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 14th July 2010 be confirmed and signed.

4. Matters arising

Signage (Minute 6) – One Member noted that there was no sign on the archway into Oriel y Parc which pointed to the centre of St Davids and he was concerned that some people may not be coming through the courtyard. Not everyone agreed that it was appropriate for the Authority to put up such a sign as other businesses along the main road would be bypassed as a result. It was also suggested that if there was no sign saying that entry was free to Oriel y Parc then this needed to be considered. Another Member suggested that looking from the car park, the grounds looked unkempt and bedraggled and feared that this might also put visitors off. Officers replied that work to address this issue had begun in the last 6-8 weeks, however it was noted that there was a balance to be maintained between keeping the site tidy and allowing the wild flowers, local biodiversity, etc to grow. It was agreed that there should be a more intensive cutting regime from 2011 onwards and that the wording of a new sign be considered by officers.



5. General Update Report

The Director of Recreation, Marketing and Communications took the Committee through his report. With regard to the Welsh Tourism Awards, he reported that unfortunately Oriol y Parc had not won the 'Sense of Place' award category, which had been given to Big Pit, however just to be shortlisted was a considerable achievement. In addition, the quality of the shortlisted entries was very high and whilst PCNPA didn't win an award this year tourism providers across Pembrokeshire, as a whole, had done very well in the awards.

The report noted that over the last 3 months, the centre had received a large increase in the number of bookings from community groups wishing to use the site for meetings and special events and some of these were listed in the report. The Temporary Manager pointed out that this was only a snapshot of the number of people and groups who used the Centre, with tours of both the gallery and building taking place on a daily basis. Engagement with the local community was important, and the Centre offered a new venue for exhibitions. In this respect, the forthcoming Stakeholder Group meeting would be very important.

In addition the centre was regularly used by schools and colleges, and there was a good programme of educational events planned for the next two months, including those around the exciting Tate Movie Project. However it was acknowledged that school budgets were under pressure and that travel to St Davids for most required a bus journey which added to the cost. The Authority's Education Team were therefore trying to develop programmes which made use of the facilities over a whole day, for example a ranger-led field trip combined with a session in the gallery. Discussions with other facilities in the City, such as the Cathedral, were due to take place to try to encourage both school and community groups to visit the two attractions as a 'package'.

It was reported that visitor numbers for the centre during the period January through September had recorded a drop of 8%, however it was noted that this had been mirrored at other indoor attractions across the County, including the TICs run by Pembrokeshire County Council, and was thought to be due to the fine and warm weather over the summer. Of greater concern was the 26% drop in visitors to the gallery and discussions about this were taking place with Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales. The results of an exit survey completed by 200 Visitors to the centre were currently being compiled and would be reported in due course. It was suggested by Members that further survey work be undertaken in conjunction with the City Council and Pembrokeshire Tourism to find out why people visited St Davids.

It was encouraging that visitor spend had increased since a retail consultant had carried out some work in 2009 but it was acknowledged



that visitor spend was likely to increase with the length of time that visitors spent in the building. Officers would therefore continue to work to enhance the visitor experience. One example of such work was a 'selling' art exhibition which would take place in the tower in December, and it was expected that others would take place next year. Within the Centre it was questioned whether there could be greater control and direction of visitors so that they were encouraged to visit all elements of the facility and it was suggested that good examples from other attractions should be looked at.

Turning to the gallery, it was reported that the next re-hang of works on paper would take place during late November. The Partnerships Projects Curator noted that the timing of the previous re-hang, which had necessitated a brief closure of the gallery in August, had not been ideal, and it was intended to try to avoid this happening in future. She commented that it had been an interesting year and National Museum Wales staff now had a greater understanding of what visitors to St Davids liked, and what they didn't, which it was hoped would lead to a more varied collection being displayed next year. Members noted that if there was no-one in the gallery, this was off-putting to visitors, and the Temporary Manager noted that she was trying to make staff more mobile within the centre so that they could be located in the gallery itself. Staff also undertook guided tours of the gallery which had helped visitors to enjoy the exhibition.

It was suggested that interpretation of the works was an area that could be improved to encourage those who would not normally visit galleries, and it was noted that the fortnightly 'Horizons' talks had proved a great success in emphasising the different aspects of the exhibition and generating publicity. It was also noted that the development of a 'Friends of Oriel y Parc' group would help in this respect, although there was a good working relationship with the Friends of Graham Sutherland group and officers were working on the development of a booklet on Sutherland's work in conjunction with the Friends group.

Members questioned whether there could be more frequent changes in the gallery artefacts, but it was explained that the cost of this was prohibitive. Another felt strongly that the works that had been displayed so far were disappointing and were not the 'iconic' pieces that had been promised and which people were prepared to travel to see. The Partnerships Project Curator disagreed and pointed out that the gallery has hosted works by Picasso, Lowry and Rembrandt alongside works by Graham Sutherland since opening in 2008. In addition, the gallery currently housed a major work by the renowned landscape painter Richard Wilson and would be receiving a prestigious painting by Lucian Freud in late November. However it was noted that there was now the opportunity for Member representation on the Content Development



Group which would meet shortly to consider the exhibition for future years.

NOTED.

[Mr David Ellis and Councillor Michael Williams tendered their apologies and left the meeting at this juncture]

6. Café Facilities Update

The Director of Recreation, Marketing and Communications updated the Committee that as a result of the decision of the Extraordinary National Park Authority meeting held on the 20th October 2010 the café would close for business on 19th November 2010. Staff had been consulted prior to the decision being taken, and the Personnel Manager had spoken to café staff with regard to any training that the Authority could provide.

The Chairman wished to thank the staff affected for their hard work.

The Chairman of the Authority had sent an e-mail to the Chief Executive emphasising that options for the use of the space should be vigorously pursued, and Members were reassured that a comprehensive review was ongoing, and the results would be reported in due course. In the meantime, a short-term use would be found for the café space.

NOTED.

7. Artist in Residence

The meeting concluded with a presentation by Mimi Joung, the Artist in Residence, on her work both past and present, and the plans she had for two of her current projects to be exhibited at the Gallery.

NOTED.

