

REPORT OF HEAD OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2010/11

Under both Local Government Measure and Wale Programme for Improvement, the Authority is required to publish an Improvement Plan Part 2 by October 31st. This reports on the progress against the work programme proposed in the Improvement Plan Part 1 for the year 2010/11.

Recommendation :

Members are requested to approve the Improvement Plan Part 2 for 2010/11

(For further information, please contact Alan Hare, Head of Business Management on extension 4810)

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

Improvement Plan 2010/11



Prepared July 2011

The National Park Authority is responsible for the preparation of the Improvement Plan, for the assessments set out within it, and the assumptions and estimates on which they are based. The Authority is also responsible for setting in place appropriate performance management and internal control systems from which the information and assessments in the Plan have been derived. The Authority is satisfied that the information and assessments included in the plan are in all material respects accurate and complete and that the plan is realistic and achievable.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Llanion Park
Pembroke Dock
Pembs SA72 6DY

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2010/11 – Part 2

Introduction

Each local authority in Wales is required to produce an Improvement Plan early in the financial year which sets out in summary, the Authority's plans for the new financial year, while this second edition, published before 31st October looks back at the previous year's activities and achievements and based partly on these, identifies where improvement is required in future years. This Improvement Plan is a summary of the Authority's performance during 2010/11 and in particular against the improvement objectives set out in the Improvement Plan part 1 published in April 2010.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park was designated in 1952 under the National Park and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

The National Park covers 62,000 hectares, primarily along 416 kilometres of coastline and the Daugleddau Estuary, and with the historic Preseli Hills in the north. About 24,000 people live in the Park, which also receives about 4.7 million visitor days each year.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority was created as a free standing special purpose local authority under the 1995 Environment Act. The Authority consists of 18 Members, 12 nominated by Pembrokeshire County Council and six appointed by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Park Purposes

The Act specifies that the purposes of a National Park Authority are

- ❖ To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the park area
- ❖ To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public.

The Act also states that in pursuing these purposes the Authority has a duty to seek to foster the social and economic well being of local communities.

The Authority is the statutory planning authority for its area, and is responsible for the preparation of the Local Development Plan and is required to produce a National Park Management Plan every five years..

As part of local government the Authority also contributes to many of the Welsh Assembly Government's wider agendas for the economy, health, sustainability and social inclusion, and better public services set out in policy publications including Wales; A Better Place, the Wales Spatial Plan, and Making the Connections.

Funding

The Authority's net expenditure is determined by the Welsh Assembly Government, by allocating the annual National Park Grant and levy, which for 2010/11 totals £4,615,536 with an additional capital grant of £166,666 for projects which underpin the strategic priorities set out in the National Parks Policy Statement of March 2007.

When providing the funding, the Welsh Assembly Government also specifies a number of performance targets in its annual Strategic Grant Letter, covering sustainability, social inclusion, corporate governance, access to the countryside, and planning.

Our Vision - What we are trying to do

Conserving and enhancing the qualities that make the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park special

Our Mission - How we achieve it

To manage one of Wales' special places and to demonstrate the many ways in which it contributes to people's quality of life and well-being.

Our Values – the way in which we will work

- ◆ Delivering to the highest standards of public service.
- ◆ Managing resources efficiently and sustainably.
- ◆ Being open and inclusive in our decision making.
- ◆ Working in partnership with communities, stakeholders and the Welsh Assembly Government.
- ◆ Supporting the development of our Members and workforce.

Corporate Objectives

Prior to the start of 2010/11 the Authority had set out six corporate objectives based on the statutory purposes, taking into consideration the National Park Management Plan, the Strategic Grant Letter from the Welsh Assembly Government, and other stakeholder preferences. However, during 2010/11 there was a significant change in staff, particularly at a senior level, resulting in quite radical changes to the Authority's approach for 2011/12. This Improvement Plan part 2 reports progress against the Improvement Plan Part 1 from April 2010, and does not therefore fully reflect the nature of the organisation in the later part of 2010/11.

The six original corporate objectives were:

1. To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the park area
2. To provide opportunities for sustainable and enjoyable recreation.
3. To promote greater understanding of the special qualities of the National Park
4. Contribute to combating climate change and the reduction of Wales' ecological footprint.
5. To provide a planning service which satisfies applicants, stakeholders and protects the National Park.
6. To demonstrate that the Authority operates to a high standard of governance

The Authority is committed to continuous improvement in its services over the longer term by producing better outcomes and reducing costs when ever possible and will work towards this on each of its objectives. However at the beginning of 2010/11 Corporate Objectives 5 and 4 were considered to be of the highest priority.

What we set out to achieve in April 2010	How we actually performed
<p><u><i>Corporate Objective 5 – A better Planning Service</i></u></p> <p><i>The Planning Service plays a vital role in delivering the Authority's first statutory purpose but has in previous years been poor in terms of speed of determining applications when compared against many other local authorities. In the past year 72% of all applications were determined within the eight week target compared to just 56% in 2008/09. In the Strategic Grant Letter WAG has set a target of determining at least 65% within the target period, but the Authority would</i></p>	<p><u>Progress Summary</u> – Met targets set by WAG, but not our own higher targets</p> <p>Although we exceeded the WAG target with 66% applications determined within 8 weeks, the overall performance did not meet our expectations. There were several reasons for this down turn.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The most senior planner retired with the result that the planning section was short of senior a member of staff for almost 6 months. 2. The Local Development Plan was adopted in September, the first in

<p><i>like to sustain its recent improvement and achieve a minimum of 75%. The backlog of outstanding applications will also be monitored closely and maintained at less than 10% of the total number of applications. The average length of time to determine an application has fallen from 87days in March 2009 to 55 days in March 2010 and this should be further reduced to 53 days during 2010/11.</i></p>	<p>Wales. New policies introduced at this time resulted in delays and additional workload as the new requirements were explained to applicants.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. New national requirements ie Design & Access and Sustainable Transport statements, created an extra workload for staff as they had to explain requirements to applicants and often assist in producing these statements 4. A new computer system was installed during the year with a period of testing and parallel running effectively duplicating some of the admin workload. 5. During the year the backlog of applications was reduced from 134 to just 48, by far the lowest in Wales, but penalising the overall 8 week performance percentage. <p>The average length of time to determine an application rose slightly to about 60 days from 55.</p>
<p><u>Corporate Objective 4 – Combating Climate Change</u></p> <p><i>UK and Welsh Assembly Government have set targets for the reduction of CO² emissions and each public authority is required to reduce its emissions by 3%. The Authority has also signed up to the 10:10 campaign. In 2009/10 there was a reduction of 10% in electricity consumption on a like for like basis in the Authority’s buildings, although the emissions through travel were unchanged. The target for the reduction</i></p>	<p><u>Progress Summary</u> – Good progress reducing electricity consumption and business mileage</p> <p>Following the significant reduction in electricity consumption in 2009/10 further reductions have been limited. Excluding the environmentally controlled Oriel y Parc Gallery, the overall reduction was 5.1%. Unfortunately, control equipment problems at the Gallery resulted in this site consuming an additional 15% electricity compared to the previous year. Further tests are being carried out to improve the environmental management</p>

<p><i>in electricity consumption in 2010/11 is at least a further 3% and the authority will endeavour to reduce its fuel consumption for both business travel and home to work travel with additional encouragement for home working and use of sustainable transport, greater use of video and phone conferences and procurement of more efficient vehicles.</i></p>	<p>and controls.</p> <p>The average home to work travel per employee has reduced by approximately 10% compared to the previous year.</p> <p>Business travel by car has been reduced by over 31,000 (18.8%) compared to the previous year.</p> <p>Video conferencing has been implemented through joint procurement with all the UK National Parks and has resulted in saving an estimated 8,270 miles travelling.</p>
<p><u>Corporate Objective 1 – Conservation</u></p> <p><i>The Authority has been contributing to the Land Use and Climate Change working Group which has recently reported to WAG. It is anticipated that the Authority’s conservation work can be adapted to help deliver some of the expected recommendations in this report, which identifies soil carbon stock as an important contribution to combating climate change.</i></p> <p><i>We will work to increase the area of land under management for conservation for wildlife and soil carbon stock. As much of this work will depend on co-operation with land owners it is impractical to set specific targets for area of land involved or to predict outcomes at this stage.</i></p>	<p><u>Progress Summary</u> – Gradual improvements on many sites. Trends show key species populations growing, but many factors outside NPA control.</p> <p>The WAG response to the report by the Land Use and Climate Change working Group has not resulted in any significant changes to our work programmes.</p> <p>Work continues on a variety of land management projects and following reviews, two management agreements have not been renewed and one new agreement commenced, with little change in the net area managed of approximately 2,000 ha. Thirty new woodland sites have applied for woodland grant.</p>
<p><u>Corporate Objective 2 – Recreation</u></p> <p><i>The Authority is responsible for the management and maintenance of 1100 km of footpaths within the National Park and in 2010 86% are open, signposted, and in a usable condition. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for</i></p>	<p><u>Progress Summary</u> – Good, with an increase in paths available and number of people using them.</p> <p>The length of rights of way open, signposted and in usable condition has increased slightly to 87.4%. Fixed point</p>

<p><i>Pembrokeshire has identified a strategic network of paths and we will prioritise maintenance on these and endeavour to maintain at least 86% of the rights of way in usable condition. In recent years we have worked to make more easy access paths and have removed a number of stiles from both the Coast Path and some inland paths. This will continue in 2010 with a further 6 stiles replaced by gates.</i></p>	<p>counters show an increase of 6% in number of people using the paths.</p>
<p><u>Corporate Objective 3 – Understanding</u></p> <p><i>The Authority’s second statutory purpose is to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public. This is achieved through a variety of means including visitor centres, leaflets and publications, an extensive schools programme. The priority this year is to improve the layout and content of the Authority’s web site and improve accessibility and consultation opportunities through greater use of networking sites such as Facebook and Youtube.</i></p>	<p><u>Progress Summary</u> – Growing demand with high levels of user satisfaction.</p> <p>The website was relaunched in October and has recorded over 158,000 individual visits. Both Facebook and Twitter sites are increasing their membership every month.</p> <p>Despite introducing some charges for the education service, the demand continues to grow and 14 schools used the service for the first time this year.</p> <p>The number of visitors to the visitor centres has dropped slightly (2.4%) compared to last year although this may be accounted for by poor weather during the summer and part of the Easter school holidays falling in the previous year. The various customer surveys in these services have all been very positive. (96% satisfaction for the centres)</p>
<p><u>Corporate Objective 6 – Governance</u></p> <p><i>We will work to continue improvement in our corporate governance and performance management. We will apply for the WLGA Member’s Charter this year and the Advanced Charter in 2011/12 and introduce a members’ development programme. We will achieve savings of £50,000 through increased joint working with our partners and other organisations and</i></p>	<p><u>Progress Summary</u> – Targets for the year achieved.</p> <p>WLGA Member’s Charter was awarded during the year and Members’ development programme is being implemented.</p> <p>Savings have been achieved in many budgets areas with salary costs reduced by £64,000 and travel by £36,000.</p>

<p><i>working more efficiently. We will increase the use of the Ffynnon performance reporting system and develop the Corporate Plan for 2011/12 in a more timely manner and with wider consultation. We will work with our colleagues in the other National Parks to develop better comparable performance indicators.</i></p>	<p>A new Corporate Strategy based on 8 outcomes over a three year rolling period has been produced in consultation with key stakeholders and performance towards this will be monitored using the Ffynnon system with the introduction of many new indicators including some to permit bench marking with other National Parks. (See Corporate Strategy 2011-14 for further details).</p>
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Response to the Corporate Assessment 20110

The Wales Audit Office made the following recommendations in their preliminary Corporate Assessment presented to Members of the Authority in July 2010.

Areas for improvement	Actions
<p>P1 Without delay ensure all the Authority's policies and strategies are up-to-date, well-coordinated, and collectively help to support delivery of the Authority's priorities.</p>	<p>HR & IT strategies updated, exercise commenced to review and map all strategies and policies.</p>
<p>P2 Ensure medium-term financial planning is closely linked to and supports delivery of the Authority's priorities.</p>	<p>Medium term financial planning in place</p>
<p>P3 Use data more effectively to manage performance particularly ensuring a greater focus on outcomes rather than actions and wherever possible using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • baseline data from which to measure progress; • targets that set out what is to be achieved; • assessments of the difference that completed actions have made; • assessments of the impact of failing to complete a planned action; • data that focuses on the Authority's corporate objectives; and • comparison data with other similar organisations. 	<p>New Corporate Strategy adopted based on outcomes with new indicators being introduced during 2011. Increased comparisons with other National Parks also being introduced.</p>

The Authority notes the comment about the Improvement Plan and will consider alternatives, and will work with WAO to meet the requirements of the Local Government Measure.

Performance Indicators

Description	Actual 2009/10	Target 2010/11	Actual to date	
The percentage of undisputed invoices which were paid in 30 days.	98.2%	100%	98%	
The percentage of employees who leave the employment of the local authority, whether on a voluntary or involuntary basis.	2.6%	5%	8%	Closure of Oriol y Parc café resulted in exceptional increase.
The number of working days/ shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) local authority employee lost due to sickness absence.	8.3	7	6.1	Provisional figure based on data available so far
The percentage of planning applications determined during the year that were approved.	86%	85%	83%	
a) The number of appeals that were determined during the year, in relation to: i) Planning application decisions ii) Enforcement notices and b) The percentage of these determined appeals that upheld the authority's decision, in relation to: i) Planning application decisions ii) Enforcement notices	17 3 47% 100%	 65% 65%	17 2 65% 0%	
a) The percentage of major planning applications determined during the year within 13 weeks, b) The percentage of minor planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks, c) The percentage of householder planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks, d) The percentage of all other planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks.	100% 66% 81% 0%	50% 65% 80% 70%	0% 58% 80% 0%	Only 7 major applications received, all related and complex Slight reduction from last year Similar to last year Only 3 'other' applications
Number of new affordable housing units approved			12	New indicator
The percentage of total length of footpaths and other rights of way which are easy to use by members of the public	86%	86%	87.4%	Assessed annually

Description	Actual 2009/10	Target 2010/11	Actual to date	
Average Member attendance at NPA, DM and Performance Review	78%	75%	81%	Good attendance and slightly improved
Area of land managed for conservation with NPA support	Approx 1,900		2,000ha	
Historic buildings at risk as % of number of listed buildings	6.9%	6%	6.9%	Reviewed annually on rolling programme
% of Scheduled Ancient Monuments in worsening condition			36%	New indicator
Historic Building grants issued	11	10	9	All available funding utilised
% of school groups giving an inspiration score of 10 or higher			75%	New indicator
Reduction in electricity consumption	10%	10%	8%	Excludes Oriell yParc where faults in environmental control programmes resulted in an increase
Number of Freedom of Information requests	26		22	
Mileage saved by use of video conference			8270	28 conference sessions during year
Number of complaints	18		17	
% change in number of walkers on coast path fixed point counters	+9%		+6%	
% of creditor payments made electronically	84%	85%	83%	
The number and percentage of posts in our Customer Contact Centre that have been designated "Welsh essential" and that have been filled by bilingual staff			4 fte 75%	
The percentage of staff who have received Welsh language training to a specific qualification level			24%	5 to 'A' level 34 to GCSE
The number of complaints received in relation to the operation of the Language Scheme			0	

Details of how to obtain further information

Further information can be obtained from the Authority's website www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk or by contacting our head office

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Llanion Park

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Or at our visitor centres in Tenby, St. Davids or Newport