

## PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

4<sup>th</sup> May 2011

Present: Councillor ML Evans  
Messrs D Ellis, R Howells and EA Sangster; Councillors JS Allen-Mirehouse, JA Brinsden, RR Evans, HM George, SL Hancock, M James, RM Lewis, PJ Morgan, WL Raymond, and M Williams.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10.00am – 12.35pm)

### 1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor RN Hancock; Mrs G Hayward and Mrs F Lanc.

### 2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2011 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2011 be confirmed and signed.

### 3. Matters Arising

#### (a) Oriel y Parc Café (Minute 4)

It was reported that this had opened on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

#### (b) Go4It! Project (Minute 8)

It was reported that a Pembrokeshire wide Big Lottery bid was being developed for funding to continue this work, and this would be submitted soon. In the meantime Tom Moses had been appointed as a Discovery Ranger in the Education Team so his skills had not been lost.

**NOTED.**

### 4. Continuous Improvement Group – report of meeting

The report of the meeting of the Continuous Improvement Group held on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2011 was presented to Members for consideration.

It was noted from the discussion on Development Management (Minute 3) that the Head of Development Management spoke at the meeting, but was not included among the officer representatives listed as being present. It was confirmed that she had been present.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the Continuous Improvement Group held on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2011 be received, subject to the above amendment.

### 5. Performance Report for the final quarter of the year 2010/11

The report of the Head of Business Management began by summarising progress towards each of the key actions set out in the Corporate Plan, noting that 35 of the 48 items had been completed, with another 11 in progress. Only



two actions would not be able to be completed by the end of the year and these were due to funding issues beyond the Authority's control. Updates were then given on key areas of work within the Authority and the report set out achievements in the previous quarter.

With regard to Development Management, performance figures for the year to date were given as well as those for the quarter October to December 2010. As expected, performance had slipped during the second half of the year due to the introduction of the new computer system, the impact to the Local Development Plan and changes in staffing. Overall 57% of applications had been determined within 8 weeks against the all Wales average of 68%. However it was anticipated that the position would improve slightly in the final quarter of the year.

Members were concerned that progress did not slip, however the view was also given that there was a need to simplify the planning system to ensure it was easily understood by everyone and it was suggested that National Parks Wales could make representations to the new Welsh Assembly Government in this regard. However it was noted that a fine balance had to be struck to ensure that any changes were not to the detriment of the very environment the Authority was trying to protect.

Within the Access and Recreation update, it was noted that as a result of maintenance and improvements work over the year, 87.4% of public rights of way within the National Park were available for use, with 69.5% being full signposted and easy to use. Members were pleased with the proportion of rights of way that were open, noting that this was a credit to the staff.

Finally, the Head of Business Management went on to report progress towards the targets set out in the Welsh Assembly Government's Strategic Grant Letter, as well as summarising risks and current actions being undertaken to mitigate those that were in the top third of the Authority's current risk register.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Performance Report for the final quarter of the year 2010/11 be approved.

## 6. Path Counters Report

The Access and Rights of Way Manager reported that electronic counters had been used on the Pembrokeshire Coast Path since 1990 and were introduced on the wider network of public rights of Way in 2006 to determine the number of walkers using the network. Seven counters had been distributed across the National Park at a range of locations which were sufficiently far away from the Coast Path to ensure that their use was not part of a coastal walk and gave a cross section of the type of paths managed by the Authority. Four counters had remained in their original locations over that time as controls, while the other three had been moved around the network to record the usage of paths that had been improved or made available for use.

The results for the calendar year of 2010 were summarised in the report and it was particularly pleasing to note that increased usage had been recorded on



both a newly restored and a newly created footpath. The annual returns from the four fixed counters were also given.

It was concluded that the counters on the public rights of way showed comparatively high and sustained levels of use. These results were very encouraging and demonstrated that the 842km network of public rights of way accounted for a significant level of recreational activity and therefore provided opportunities for healthy exercise, recreation and a sustainable mode of transport within the National Park

Members commended the work that was done on the paths and their value to the local economy, but also asked about the cost of upkeep of some remote inland paths that were not well used. The Access and Public Rights of Way Manager replied that investment in the network was considered to be important for local communities both in economic terms and because exercise and access to the countryside was important for quality of life. The idea of charging for use of the paths was raised by one Member, although others disagreed. It was also suggested that Community Councils could be encouraged to publicise the paths in their area and the Officer noted that there was some scope for discussions to take place with area Rangers, but that paths were in any case publicised on the Authority's website. Finally it was suggested that the value of the paths would be increased if more work could be done to reduce the amount of overhead cables that spoiled the view in many cases. Officers were asked to take up this point with Western Power.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Path Counters Report be received.

## **7. Castell Henllys Iron Age Fort**

The Head of Archaeological Heritage gave a presentation on Castell Henllys – how it had been acquired by the Authority and how its use had increased from a few thousand visitors to 30,000 per year, many of whom were school children. A variety of activities now took place at the site throughout the year, including guided tours, ecology days, storytelling and Celtic festivals with staff in iron age costume. The historic environment is valued by visitors and knowledge of the site was based on the thirty years of archaeological investigation that had taken place, with four iron age roundhouses being reconstructed on original sites. The programme of events tried to give a greater awareness of the national park's historic landscape and how some aspects of iron age sustainable management could be applied to today's landscape.

Members thanked the Officer for his presentation and praised the work that went on at this unique site, which promoted both the historical and cultural heritage of the county.

**NOTED.**

