

REPORT OF BUSINESS & PERFORMANCE MANAGER

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC GRANT LETTER 2013/14

Purpose of Report

This Report is to ask Members to receive the strategic grant letter for the current year.

Introduction/Background

In conjunction with the annual National Park Grant from Welsh Government, the Authority also receives a Strategic Grant Letter which sets out their desired priorities and outcomes.

With a new policy statement expected to be confirmed later this year, the grant letter is less specific than usual, but gives guidance as to the priority areas expected of the National Park Authorities. These include

- Be exemplars of sustainable development, thriving ecosystems, and recreation opportunities
- Increased partnership working
- Working to reduce the impact of poverty
- Increasing access opportunities
- Contributing to the development and implementation of ecosystems
- Effective planning service

A copy of the Strategic Grant Letter is attached.

Financial considerations

Within approved budget

Risk considerations

None

Compliance

None

Human Rights/Equality issues

None

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

None

Welsh Language statement

No additional implications.

Recommendation

Members RECEIVE the Strategic Grant Letter for 2013/14.

Background Documents

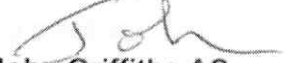
None

(For further information, please contact Alan Hare)

Author: Alan Hare

Yn unol â threfniadau cyfredol, rwy'n disgwyl i chi drefnu bod Llywodraeth Cymru yn cael adroddiadau bras ar sut y mae pethau'n symud yn eu blaen bob chwe mis.

Rwy'n hapus i gymryd lan fy mhortffolio newydd, rwy hefyd wedi cadw cyfrifoldeb am y Parciau Cenedlaethol. Mae diwylliant Cymru wedi ei wreiddio yn ei thirwedd, ac mae Cymry yn aml yn mynegi ei hunaniaeth drwy ei chysylltiadau gyda manau sy'n bwysig iddynt. Rwy'n edrych ymlaen at gydweithio â chi dros y flwyddyn nesaf.

Yn gywir,


John Griffiths AC

Gweinidog Diwylliant a Chwaraeon

Minister for Culture and Sport

John Griffiths AC /AM
Gweinidog Diwylliant a Chwaraeon
Minister for Culture and Sport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

To : The Chairs of the 3
National Park Authorities

10 May 2013

Dear *Simon*,

Strategic Grant Allocation 2013-14

My officials have already advised you of the resources being made available by the Welsh Government in support of your work in 2013 – 2014. A copy of that advice is attached at Annex 1. The purpose of this letter is to highlight the priority areas on which the Welsh Ministers would wish to see these resources being targeted in the year ahead.

It is my view that the National Parks should be exemplars of sustainable development; living, working landscapes with vibrant rural economies, thriving ecosystems and biodiversity, and extensive recreation opportunities. As the National Park Authorities I expect you to be demonstrating leadership in achieving such conditions, and taking confident strides when it comes to managing positive landscape change for the benefit of people and the environment.

The new Policy Statement for Protected Landscapes will set out a clear vision for the designated landscapes in Wales that puts sustainable development at the heart of a contemporary interpretation of the purposes and duties of these designations. I am pleased that the park authorities have shown an eagerness to be involved in the development of the policy statement and related outcomes, and there will be further opportunity for you, and for other interested parties, to input before it is finalised later this year.

The Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery has recently been established to consider how effective public services are in Wales and how they could be improved. It will make an assessment of how far the current arrangements for all devolved services meet the needs of Wales now and for the future and propose a model of public service governance and delivery for Wales. It will also be engaging widely and considering the interaction with non devolved services. As you know it is my intention to review the governance arrangements for the National Parks to reflect on matters such as the nature of the accountability to Welsh Ministers, the administration of the authorities, and links to other bodies such as Natural Resources Wales. The work of the Commission will overlap this review, and so it is my intention to wait for its report, which should be published by the end of 2013, before scoping the review of National Park Authorities.

In time, the policy statement will become embedded into the guidance and approach to the National Park Management Plans that you are required to produce. In the meantime, I

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Ffacs * Fax 029 2089 8129
PS.minister.for.ESH@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

Printed on 100% recycled paper

expect you to pursue the priorities agreed in those plans, whilst having regard to the vision and outcomes that it will contain, and the specific priorities set out below.

In these difficult financial times, it is extremely important that organisations work together to maximise skills, resources, expertise and develop new and innovative ideas. I would like to see a new level of partnership working achieved during the coming year; not only between the National Park Authorities, but also by supporting integrated working at local, regional and national levels to address fundamental issues such as tackling poverty and increasing sustainability. I expect Park Authorities to work constructively and collaboratively with their constituent local authorities on cross-cutting issues including economic development, housing, transport, cultural heritage and education.

The Welsh Government is placing a strong emphasis on tackling poverty in Wales. There is a direct link between the national commitment to sustainability, the alleviation of poverty, addressing the root causes of inequality, and supporting civil society, and the purpose and ambition for the national parks. I am keen to see Park Authorities working with others on reducing the gaps that exist between families living in low-income households and their more affluent peers in terms of health, education, skills and economic outcomes. The Park Authorities are already very active in promoting social inclusion but I think more could be done to improve community participation in environmental projects in deprived areas. In so doing, you will be making a contribution to tackling the poverty agenda in Wales.

A key commitment for the Welsh Government this Assembly term is to improve public rights of way and widen access opportunities, in particular for children and families. I expect the Park Authorities to continue their work with the constituent local authorities to find ways of increasing access to the National Park for all sectors of society making linkages to organisations outside the Parks to achieve this objective. I am also keen to see the Park Authorities participate positively in our work to develop access and green space provision in the Environment Bill.

National Parks contain much of Wales' rich and varied cultural heritage and you have an important role in protecting this resource and interpreting it for your visitors. Working in partnership with other heritage organisations can be one way to maximise the impact you can make in this area.

I would like to see under the banner "Sustaining a Living Wales" a more integrated approach to managing the natural environment that improves the health of ecosystems. The work carried out in the National Parks, and in particular by the Park Authorities should be seen as exemplar in the care and improvement of the natural environment. The National Park Authorities should continue to take an active role in taking forward the principles behind "Sustaining a Living Wales" and to contribute to the discussions on its development and implementation.

An effective, transparent, consistent and enabling planning service is key to balancing the socio-economic needs of local communities, the protection of landscape, and the natural environment. Taking decisions in accord with an up-to-date development plan and 'Planning Policy Wales', is crucial to making development management an open, efficient service, providing sound, consistent decisions in which business and communities in the Parks can have confidence. This should reflect the important role of planning in securing appropriate economic development, the provision of affordable housing and supporting biodiversity.

I am pleased with the progress made by the Park Authorities in developing your local development plans, which provide a framework for sustainable land use planning across the Park Authority. Once plans are adopted, annual monitoring is essential to ensure they remain up-to-date and responsive to the key issues you are seeking to address.

As local planning authorities for your areas, I expect you to continue to secure improvements in your planning services, including determining planning applications within the specified timescales, reducing any backlogs, and taking action on planning cases where enforcement action is necessary.

In line with the current arrangements, I expect you to arrange for the Welsh Government to receive brief six monthly reports on progress.

I am pleased that in taking up my new portfolio, I have retained responsibility for the National Parks. Welsh culture in particular is rooted in its landscape, and Welsh people often express their identity through their connection with places that are important to them. I look forward to working with you in the coming year.

Yours,


John Griffiths AM

**Gweinidog Diwylliant a Chwaraeon
Minister for Culture and Sport**