

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT:
ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT

Purpose of Report

To ask Members to receive the Annual Improvement Report from Wales Audit Office.

Introduction/Background

Under the Local Government Measure, the Wales Audit Office is required to present its Improvement Report to the Authority. This report summarises the findings by Wales Audit Office during the period 2011/12 and is attached.

Financial considerations

None

Risk considerations

No additional risks are involved.

Compliance

Required to comply with Local Government Measure.

Human Rights/Equality issues

None.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

None

Welsh Language statement

The approved document available in Welsh and is published on Wales Audit Office website.

Recommendation

Members RECEIVE the Annual Improvement Report 2011/12.

Background Documents

None

(For further information, please contact Alan Hare)

Author: Alan Hare

Consultees:



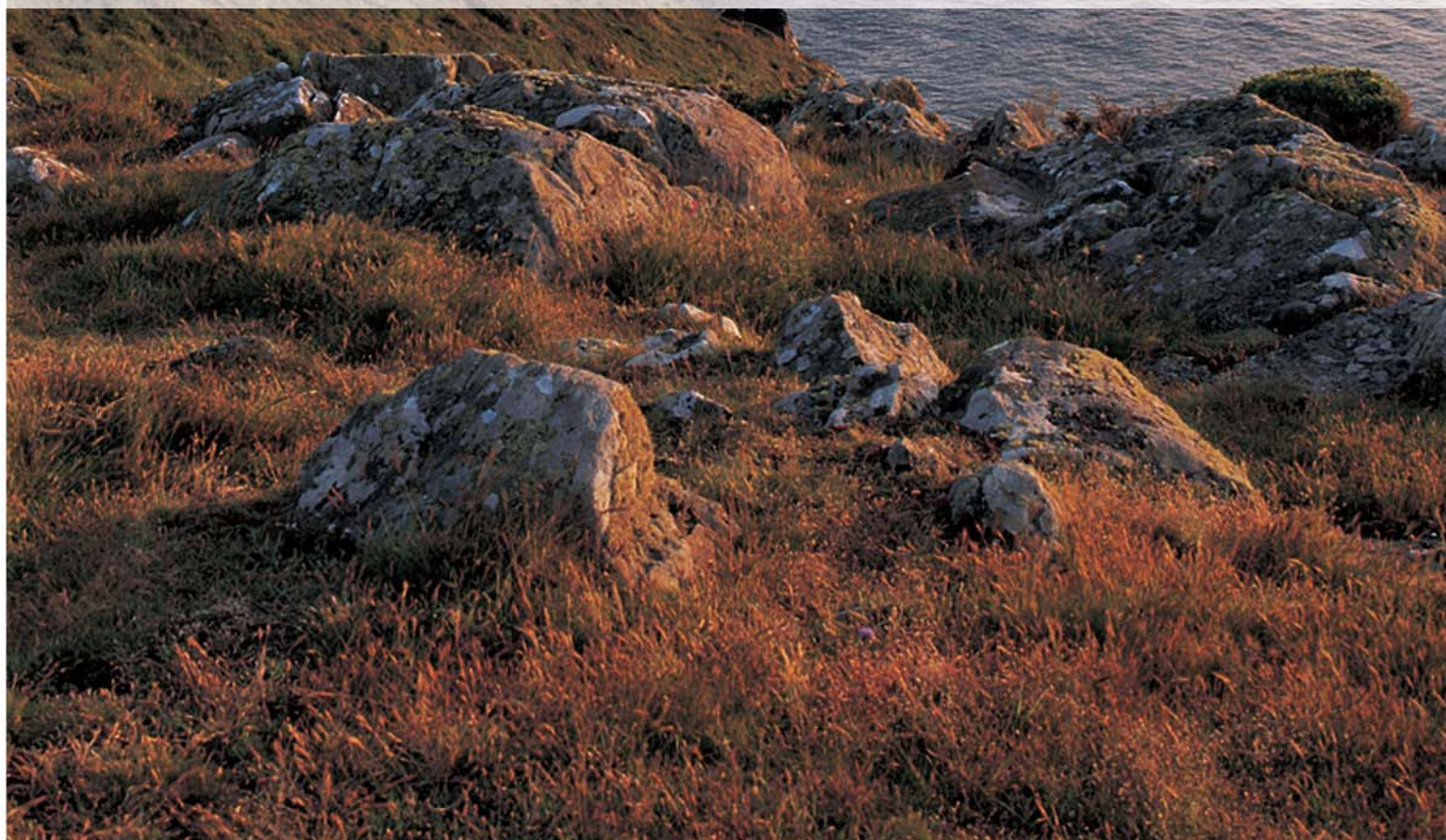
WALES **AUDIT** OFFICE
SWYDDFA **ARCHWILIO** CYMRU

Annual Improvement Report

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

Issued: April 2013

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About the Auditor General for Wales

The Auditor General is independent of government and is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen. He leads the Wales Audit Office and is held accountable by the Public Accounts Committee of the National Assembly for the Wales Audit Office's work.

The Auditor General is the external auditor of the Welsh Government and its sponsored and related public bodies, the Assembly Commission and National Health Service bodies in Wales. He also appoints the external auditors of Welsh local government bodies, including unitary authorities, police, probation, fire and rescue authorities, national park authorities and community councils. The Auditor General's appointed auditors are responsible for the annual audit of nearly £5.5 billion of funding that is passed by the Welsh Government to local government in the form of general and specific grants. Local government, in turn, raises a further £2.1 billion through council tax and business rates.

As well as carrying out financial audit, the Auditor General's role is to examine how public bodies manage and spend public money, including achieving value in the delivery of public services. The Wales Audit Office aims to make public money count, by promoting improvement, so that people in Wales benefit from accountable, well-managed public services that offer the best possible value for money. It is also committed to identifying and spreading good practice across the Welsh public sector.

This Annual Improvement Report has been prepared on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales by John Roberts under the direction of Alan Morris.

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Summary report

- 1 Each year, the Auditor General must report on how well Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national park authorities are planning for improvement and delivering their services. Drawing on the work of the relevant Welsh inspectorates, as well as work undertaken on his behalf by the Wales Audit Office, this report presents a picture of improvement over the last year. The report is in three main sections, which cover the Authority's delivery and evaluation of services in relation to 2011-12, and its planning of improvement for 2012-13.
- 2 Overall the Auditor General has concluded that the Authority has made good progress in how it is managing and delivering improvement and knows what it needs to do to make further improvements.
- 3 We found that, during 2011-12, the Authority generally performed well in terms of providing access to, and encouraging the use, enjoyment and understanding of the Park. However it fell short of the high standard it had set itself for its planning service.
- 4 We also found that, once the Authority fully embeds its use of measures of success in its approach to self evaluation, it can continue to make progress in how it assesses its own performance, especially if it further enhances its approach to evaluating its governance arrangements.
- 5 Finally, the report sets out our views on how well the Authority is planning for, and making arrangements to support, improvement. We concluded that the Authority continues to make progress in the way it plans for improvement and develops its supporting arrangements.

Recommendations

- 6 We have not made any statutory recommendations in this report.

Detailed report

Introduction

- 7 Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure), the Auditor General must report each year on how well Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national park authorities are planning for improvement and delivering their services. **Appendix 1** provides more information about the Auditor General's powers and duties under the Measure. With help from other inspectorates where appropriate, we have brought together a picture of what each council or authority in Wales is trying to achieve and how it is going about it. This report also sets out the progress the Authority has made since the Auditor General published his last annual improvement report, drawing on the Authority's own self-assessment of its performance for 2011-12.
- 8 We do not undertake a comprehensive annual review of all Authority arrangements or services. The conclusions in this report are based on our cumulative and shared knowledge and the findings of prioritised work undertaken this year.
- 9 Given the wide range of services provided and the challenges facing the Authority, it would be unusual if we did not find things that can be improved. The Auditor General is able to:
- recommend to Ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way;
 - conduct a special inspection and publish the report with detailed recommendations;
 - make formal recommendations for improvement – if a formal recommendation is made the Authority must respond to that recommendation publicly within 30 days; and
 - make proposals for improvement – if we make proposals to the Authority, we would expect them to do something about them and we will follow up what happens.
- 10 We want to find out if this report gives you the information you need and whether it is easy to understand. You can let us know your views by e-mailing us at info@wao.gov.uk or writing to us at 24, Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9LJ.

The Authority has made good progress in how it is managing and delivering improvement and knows what it needs to do to make further improvements

During 2011-12, the Authority generally performed well in terms of providing access to, and encouraging the use, enjoyment and understanding of the Park but it fell short of the high standard it had set itself for its planning service

- 11 This section of the report looks at the Authority's performance in the period between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012. We have focused on those areas that the Authority had identified as improvement objectives under the local government measure and on the available evidence that could demonstrate whether or not these objectives had been delivered.
- 12 In 2011-12, the Authority had set itself a target of becoming one of the six top planning authorities in Wales. This was a target that had been influenced by the significant improvements in its planning function during the previous year. Although the Authority agreed some measures for assessing progress, these weren't clearly linked to an understanding of what 'top six' meant.
- 13 Sixty per cent of pre-application advice requests were responded to within 20 days, compared with an average of 30 days in the previous year. However, full year performance in 2011-12 for the number of applications determined within eight weeks rose only from 65 per cent to

67 per cent, placing the Authority in 18th place on that measure, out of 25 in Wales. By its own admission, the Authority failed to reach its challenging target for the planning service. Several staffing changes within that service, together with uncharacteristically high sickness levels, may well have been a factor, especially since the speed of determination improved at the end of 2011-12.

- 14 On a more positive note, the Authority published planning guidance for renewable energy proposals and sustainable design and approved supplementary planning guidance to promote affordable housing. Eighty five per cent of enforcement cases were closed within 12 weeks during 2011-12, compared to only 51 per cent in the previous year and the backlog of enforcement cases was reduced from 120 to 92.
- 15 Speed of processing continues to be one of the main standard performance indicators for all planning authorities. It is hoped that, in due course, the Planning Officers Society for Wales, working with the Welsh Government, will develop more useful measures of success.
- 16 Access to the Park is of great importance if the Authority is to meet one of its purposes under the 1995 Environment Act of promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public. As with most public sector organisations throughout Wales, the Authority is under significant financial pressure. Although the relevant budget was reduced by three per cent in 2011-12, the Authority's aim was to maintain the standard of footpaths.

- 17 The Authority assessed that 87 per cent of the total network of paths were open and usable in 2011-12, compared to an average in Wales of about 55 per cent and an average of 85 per cent in the English National Parks. The ability to maintain footpaths in a usable condition does, however, depend partly on landscape and terrain. However a recent benchmarking exercise has identified that different National Park Authorities use different criteria for this assessment. A revised joint measure has been agreed between the Authority and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and it is estimated that the number of paths meeting the new criteria within the Park is closer to 70 per cent.
- 18 An analysis of the Authority's data on the length of stile free sections, of paths designated as 'gentle walk' and of paths which are accessible by wheelchair indicates that, in 2011-12, over 180km of paths were suitable for less able users. Although this appears to be a significant improvement on the 130km identified for 2010-11, the assessment of the data may not have been quite so robust in previous years. The Authority provides and promotes circular walking routes within 500 metres of 45 of the 50 main settlements within the Park.
- 19 A recent survey of local residents by the Pembrokeshire Citizens' Panel suggested that 45 per cent used the rights of way within the Park at least once a month and that only six per cent never used them. This showed an improvement over similar surveys in 2008 and 2010 which indicated that 25 per cent of local residents did not use the paths. Results from the same 2011 survey gave an 85 per cent user satisfaction with rights of way¹.
- 20 Counters are installed in a number of places within the Park and these suggest that, for the areas covered, usage dropped by around 10 per cent, from around 132,000 in 2010-11 to around 119,000 in 2011-12. Although not all the counters work all of the time and the readings cannot always be done at the same time, they do provide an indication of numbers. Weather conditions during any year can also affect the level of usage.
- 21 The Authority can also more directly influence the public's enjoyment and understanding of the Park. This can take many forms such as organised events and walks, visitor centre facilities, publications, web-based information and educational talks – all of these, and more, are offered by the Authority.
- 22 In 2011-12 the Authority continued to develop and improve its use of the internet. An easy access guide was republished and the Coast Path easy access guide was uploaded onto its website, making a total of 210 walks available for download. The Authority also approved a Recreation Strategy during 2011-12.
- 23 Although lower than the Authority's target of 260,000 for 2011-12, the number of people making use of the Authority's visitor centres increased from 254,000 to 255,000. There was wide variation between the centres, with Oriel y Parc visitors increasing by seven per cent, while visits to Newport visitor centre fell by the same percentage. The number of visits to the Authority's website rose dramatically during 2011-12 with 178,000 hits during the period between July 2011 and the end of March 2012, compared to

¹ There were no comparable figures from earlier surveys.

158,000 during the whole of 2010-11. Coast to Coast is the Authority's main publication for providing information on the Park and the events it has scheduled. Two hundred and thirty thousand copies were distributed in 2011-12, the same as in previous years. The Authority continues its work with schools and, in 2011 12, 25 secondary schools were involved in its educational programme.

24 Assessing the impact of these numbers is a real challenge for the Authority. However, it has taken steps to try and demonstrate that the resources it invests in at least some of these initiatives do lead to greater enjoyment and understanding. Some of these assessments are more relevant than others but they are set out below:

- over 78² per cent of school groups reported an inspiration score of 10 or higher (out of a maximum of 11) after attending an Authority event;
- surveys of over 1,000 visitors were carried out at both Carew Castle and Castell Henllys with 90 per cent and 87 per cent respectively reporting that they had learned something about the National Park;
- both Carew Castle and Castell Henllys were considered to be value for money by over 96 per cent of respondents to the same survey; and

- a survey of visitors at Tenby Visitor Centre³ showed that over 80 per cent of users had learned something which helped them to understand the special qualities of the area and which added to their enjoyment.

25 A particular focus for the Authority during 2011-12 was to try and increase the number of 'hard to reach' participants taking part in the Authority's events and activities. These 'hard to reach' individuals may find it difficult to make use of the Park's facilities for reasons such as finance, health and transport.

26 Working with Campaign for National Parks and other National Park Authorities, the Authority has benefited from funding for the MOSAIC project, designed to encourage black and ethnic minorities to make more use of what National Parks have to offer. A leader for this project was appointed during 2011-12. Relevant events organised by the Authority included those with Communities First groups and under the Go4It⁴ programme. In consultation with the local health trust, the Authority established a 'Walkability' programme of supervised walks, designed to promote the health benefits of exercise.

27 As a result of actions taken by the Authority, the number of 'hard to reach' participants taking part in its events and activities increased from 1,800 in 2010-11 to 2,600⁵ in 2011-12.

² When taken as a percentage of all those who completed a questionnaire this figure reduces to just over 73 per cent.

³ Budget constraints meant that insufficient data was collected at the other centres.

⁴ A programme of activities for children and young people from five to 16 years of age.

⁵ Inevitable delays in collecting all the information meant that this final figure is greater than the 2,332 reported to the Authority's members in March 2012.

Once the Authority fully embeds its use of measures of success in its approach to self evaluation, it can continue to make progress in how it assesses its own performance, especially if it further enhances its approach to evaluating its governance arrangements

28 In November 2012 we wrote to the Authority's Chief Executive to advise him that the Authority had discharged its improvement reporting duties under the Measure and had acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. We reached this conclusion because:

- the Authority published its *Improvement Plan – Part 2 2011/12* (Improvement Plan) in advance of the statutory deadline of 31 October 2012 and it includes summary evaluations on progress against the Authority's improvement objectives; and
- the Improvement Plan includes performance indicators for a number of areas together with, where available, comparisons with its own performance in the previous year.

29 In that same letter we noted that the Improvement Plan was a useful and readable Improvement Plan that incorporated wide ranging comparisons but that omissions and inaccuracies in some of the data weakened the Improvement Plan and made it more difficult for the Authority to set suitable targets for the future.

30 The Authority maintained the improvements it made to its Improvement Plan in the previous year in that the Improvement Plan remained easy to read, concise and accessible to a wide range of readers. The Improvement Plan set out the Authority's assessment of progress against each of its improvement objectives under the Measure, with references to the information that supported those assessments. Unlike the previous year, the Improvement Plan included comparisons of performance, where available, with the other two national park authorities in Wales and, in several instances, to the average performance of the national park authorities in England.

31 However, the absence of information within the Improvement Plan on performance in relation to many of the Authority's agreed measures of success, together with some under reporting of performance, suggested that there is more to do before the Authority's approach to self assessment is effectively embedded within the organisation. The Authority developed its own local performance indicators, with a view to collecting information which could better inform a self assessment of progress towards achieving its improvement priorities. Some of that information was collected for the first time during 2011-12 and, as such, had the potential to act as baseline measures against which further progress could be measured.

- 32 We looked at a small sample of performance indicators in more detail and found some errors in the reported figures. While these errors tended to understate the Authority's performance, incorrect information undermines the validity of any targets set in relation to these indicators for the following year. We also found that, in relation to the 11 'measures of success' the Authority had identified at the beginning of 2011-12, results for six of them had not been specifically reported in its Improvement Plan. This oversight, together with some of the issues identified in terms of collecting accurate data, might be considered to be an indication of the extent to which the Authority's processes for monitoring and reporting on progress against achievement of its improvement objectives have been fully embedded within the organisation.
- 33 The statutory deadline for the publication of the Authority's next Improvement Plan, covering performance in 2012-13 is not until the end of October 2013. The Authority intends to respond to the issues outlined above and in our November 2012 letter, by introducing a process for reviewing performance indicator data before finalising that Improvement Plan. The Authority has now set up a working group to test all performance indicators and to ensure that similar problems do not occur in future years.
- 34 The production of an Annual Governance Statement is a relatively new requirement for local authorities. An effective Annual Governance Statement should evaluate the arrangements an authority has in place, not just describe them. In evaluating its arrangements, an Authority is much better placed to identify weaknesses and to take steps to make appropriate improvements. As with so many other improvement authorities across Wales, the Authority is still refining its approach to how it is prepared. The Authority began to incorporate an evaluative aspect in its *Annual Governance Statement for 2011-12*. It scored itself against a range of relevant parameters set out in a CIPFA code of practice on Annual Governance Statements and has involved members in that process. This helped the Authority identify areas relating to its corporate arrangements where improvements could be made, for example, in terms of delegation of powers. The Authority continues to develop its approach in producing its *Annual Governance Statement for 2012-13* and we plan to deliver a workshop for all three National Park Authorities in the near future that will help support the production of more useful Annual Governance Statements in future years.
- 35 The auditor appointed by the Auditor General gave his opinion on the Authority's accounts on 27 September 2012 and based on this the Appointed Auditor's view is that the financial statements were generally satisfactory. [Appendix 3](#) gives more detail.

The Authority continues to make progress in the way it plans for improvement and develops its supporting arrangements

36 We wrote to the Authority's Chief Executive in September 2012 to advise him of our views about the arrangements the Authority had put in place to secure improvements during 2012-13. Our opinion was that the Authority has discharged its improvement planning duties under the Measure and has acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. In addition, based on, and limited to, work carried out up to August 2012 by the Wales Audit Office, we believe that the Authority is likely to comply with the requirement to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement during the 2012-13 financial year.

37 We reached these conclusions for a number of reasons, including:

- the Authority's improvement objectives for 2012-13 were developed in the context of consultation with stakeholders that was at an appropriate level for a relatively small organisation and with the involvement of members and staff and were generally focused more on outcomes, rather than actions;
- the Authority's improvement plan for 2012-13 uses a format which is easy to read, concise and clear and includes measures and targets, where appropriate, for its improvement objectives; and
- the Authority had reorganised its staff into five new departments, streamlining line management.

38 The Authority has made progress in responding to some of the outstanding proposals for improvement we made. For example:

- team plans are now being introduced that ensure explicit links between planned activity and the Authority's aims and objectives;
- the Authority is now using data from the *State of Wildlife in Pembrokeshire* report⁶ as a baseline that will provide information on progress in achieving its strategic outcomes;
- risk registers now take account of both service and corporate issues and risks are allocated to a single individual, with the main risks assigned to individual members of the Authority with the responsibility for monitoring mitigating actions and any significant changes; and
- the Authority's review of existing policies is nearing completion, with a timetable for updates having been agreed and further progress is reported to the Authority's leadership group every month.

39 Local government elections held in May 2012, led to seven new members being nominated to the Authority by Pembrokeshire County Council, none of whom had been members of the Authority in the past and with only two of those seven having been councillors previously. Two of the six Welsh Government appointees to the Authority were also relatively new.

⁶ Published by the Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership.

This represented a major change to the Authority's membership and, as well as requiring training input, the changes had the potential to significantly influence the direction of travel that the previous administration had set out.

40 However, to date, the Authority has not been subject to any major changes in terms of its planned approach to delivering improvement. This has, no doubt, been partly due to the extensive training and induction delivered to members by the Authority. Personal development interviews for members are also scheduled over the coming months.

41 In the absence of an 'opposition', the scrutiny function within National Park Authorities is recognised as being difficult to deliver effectively. Plans the Authority had in place to improve scrutiny have recently been implemented. The Authority has established two scrutiny committees, to run consecutively, with nine different members on each. The first of these committees has almost completed its work of looking at the Authority's approach to affordable housing. There are still some uncertainties about how its findings, expected in May 2013, can best be taken forward. Capacity in terms of supporting these new committees has not so far been an issue. The terms of reference provide for the scrutiny committees to co-opt external advisers to assist in the scrutiny process as necessary. The ability to bring in expertise, together with a focus on one or two specific areas, has the potential to provide more effective scrutiny.

42 Staff within the Authority's planning service continue to explore options for introducing measures of performance that focus less on speed of delivery and more on the quality of the service and on its outcomes. We understand that the Planning Officers' Society for Wales and the Welsh Government have held meetings to discuss how planning authorities across Wales could use more meaningful measures of performance. These meetings form part of a wider-ranging review by the Welsh Government of the planning service framework across Wales. It will be important that the Authority ensures that any measures it adopts for 2013-14 and beyond take account of any results emerging from this work.

43 Capacity within the Authority's planning service was an issue during part of 2012-13. The Authority minimised the impact through the use of external consultants to deal with planning peaks and by more flexible working between the Authority's different departments. All vacant posts within the planning service have now been filled, with the possibility of an additional post being created, depending on the outcome of a bid for an additional grant. The Authority continues to use consultants and part time staff to deal with peaks in workload.

- 44 Some of the work carried out by the Authority that should help provide a more effective planning service including:
- improving its validation procedures for planning applications and formalising its pre application service;
 - bringing in expertise to review the planning service's section of the Authority's website and to improve the link to the national planning portal;
 - holding meetings between the planning service and some of the 50 or more local community councils; and
 - carrying out a customer survey linked to all planning decision notices issued over a two month period.
- 45 The Authority has recognised the need to appoint more bilingual staff in future and the Welsh language learning needs of all staff are considered during their performance reviews. This year, there was a substantial delay before the Authority's annual monitoring report on the implementation of its Welsh language scheme was received. As a result, the monitoring process has not yet been completed. Sufficient information was not provided on some aspects of the language scheme, for example means of measuring the Authority's own performance and monitoring external agencies' compliance with the language scheme. The Authority should prioritize monitoring compliance internally and externally, develop means of measuring performance and provide full information in its next report to the Commissioner.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Status of this report

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) requires the Auditor General to undertake an annual improvement assessment, and to publish an annual improvement report, for each improvement authority in Wales. This requirement covers local councils, national park authorities, and fire and rescue authorities.

This report has been produced by the Wales Audit Office on behalf of the Auditor General to discharge his duties under section 24 of the Measure. The report also discharges his duties under section 19 to issue a report certifying that he has carried out an improvement assessment under section 18 and stating whether, as a result of his improvement plan audit under section 17, he believes that the authority has discharged its improvement planning duties under section 15.

Improvement authorities are under a general duty to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of [their] functions'. Improvement authorities are defined as local councils, national park authorities, and fire and rescue authorities.

The annual improvement assessment is the main piece of work that enables the Auditor General to fulfil his duties. The improvement assessment is informed by a forward-looking assessment of an authority's likelihood to comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. It also includes a retrospective assessment of whether an authority has achieved its planned improvements in order to inform a view as to the authority's track record of improvement. This report also summarises the Auditor General's conclusions on the authority's self-assessment of its performance.

The Auditor General may also in some circumstances carry out special inspections (under section 21), which will be reported to the relevant authorities and Ministers, and which he may publish (under section 22). This published Annual Improvement Report summarises audit and assessment reports including any special inspections (under section 24).

An important ancillary activity for the Wales Audit Office is the co-ordination of assessment and regulatory work (required by section 23), which takes into consideration the overall programme of work of all relevant regulators at an improvement authority. The Auditor General may also take account of information shared by relevant regulators (under section 33) in his assessments.

Appendix 2

Useful information about Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and the Authority

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

The Authority spends approximately £4.2 million per year (2012-13). This equates to about £185 per resident. In the same year, the Authority also spent £240,000 on capital items.

The Authority is made up of 12 elected members appointed by Pembrokeshire County Council and by six appointees made by the Welsh Government. These members make decisions about priorities and use of resources.

The Authority's Chief Executive is Tegryn Jones. Jane Gibson is the Director of Park Direction and Planning. The Director of Delivery and Discovery is James Parkin and Alan Hare is the Head of Business Management.

For more information see the Authority's own website at www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk or contact the Authority at Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock, Pembrokeshire. SA72 6DY.

Appendix 3

Appointed Auditor's Annual Audit Letter

Mr T Jones
Chief Executive
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Llanion Park
Pembroke Dock
Pembrokeshire
SA72 6DY

Dear Mr Jones

Annual Audit Letter

This letter summarises the key messages arising from my statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 as the Appointed Auditor and my reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice.

The Parks Authority complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and its use of resources

It is the Authority's responsibility to:

- put systems of internal control in place to ensure the regularity and lawfulness of transactions and to ensure that its assets are secure;
- maintain proper accounting records;
- prepare a Statement of Accounts in accordance with relevant requirements; and
- establish and keep under review appropriate arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires me to:

- provide an audit opinion on the accounting statements;
- review the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources; and
- issue a certificate confirming that I have completed the audit of the accounts.

Authorities in Wales prepare their accounting statements in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. This Code is based on International Financial Reporting Standards.

I issued an unqualified audit opinion on 27 September 2012 on the accounting statements confirming that they presented a true and fair view of the Authority's financial position and transactions. My report is contained within the Statement of Accounts. The key matters arising from the accounts audit were reported to members at the Full Authority meeting on the 26 September 2012 in my Audit of Financial Statements (ISA260) report. The main issues arising were as follows:

- There were a small number of 'corrected misstatements'.
- As in previous years, the information provided for audit was relevant, reliable, comparable and easy to understand, reflecting well on a department which had particular pressures during the year.
- I did not encounter any significant difficulties during our audit. We received information in a timely and helpful manner and were not restricted in our work. The effective working arrangements established with finance staff have continued for this year.

I issued a certificate confirming that the audit of the accounts has been completed on 27 September 2012. During the course of the year there have been no formal challenge or objection issues that I have had to deal with. The final fee will be in line with that set out in my Annual Audit Outline.

My consideration of the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness has been based on the audit work undertaken on the accounts as well as placing reliance on the work completed as part of the Improvement Assessment under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. Overall, I am satisfied that the Authority has appropriate arrangements in place. The Auditor General will highlight areas where the effectiveness of these arrangements has yet to be demonstrated or where improvements could be made when he publishes his Annual Improvement Report.

I would like to express my appreciation to all the Authority staff that have assisted with the completion of my audit.

Yours sincerely

Richard Harries, Engagement Lead
For and on behalf of the Appointed Auditor
26 November 2012

Cc Richard Griffiths, Finance Manager

Local electors and others have a right to look at the Authority's accounts. When the Authority has finalised its accounts for the previous financial year, usually around June or July, it must advertise that they are available for people to look at. You can get copies of the accounts from the Authority; you can also inspect all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers and receipts relating to them for 20 working days after they are made available. You can ask the auditor questions about the accounts for the year that they are auditing. For example, you can simply tell the auditor if you think that something is wrong with the accounts or about waste and inefficiency in the way the Authority runs its services. For more information see the Wales Audit Office leaflet, *Council accounts: your rights*, on our website at www.wao.gov.uk or by writing to us at the address on the back of this report.

Appendix 4

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority's improvement objectives and self-assessment

The Authority's improvement objectives

The Authority is required by the Welsh Government to make plans to improve its functions and the services it provides. Each year it must publish these plans along with specific 'improvement objectives' that set out the key things that the Authority intends to do to improve. The Authority must do this as soon as possible after 1 April each year.

The Authority published its improvement objectives for 2012-13 in its *Improvement Plan – Part 1 2012/13* which can be found on the Authority website at www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?PID=437. They are:

Improvement Objectives for 2011-12	Improvement Objectives for 2012-13
Our planning service has improved significantly over the past two years and we must build on this improvement so that our planning service is consistently amongst the top six in Wales	To monitor and improve the level of customer service and satisfaction
The standard of footpath maintenance will be maintained although the budget is reduced by 3%	Increasing the percentage of paths open and usable, as measured against revised criteria, to 85%
More people encounter the key messages of the National Park through visiting our centres	To continue to develop and improve the performance of the planning service
We will increase the number of 'hard to reach' participants taking part in our events and activities from 1,800 to 2,000	To increase and improve the opportunities for access and understanding of the National Park for 'hard to reach' groups

The Authority's self-assessment of performance

The Authority's self-assessment of its performance during 2011-12 can be found at <http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?PID=437> and is called the *Improvement Plan – Part 2 2011/12*.

Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: info@wao.gov.uk

Website: www.wao.gov.uk

Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru
24 Heol y Gadeirlan
Caerdydd CF11 9LJ

Ffôn: 029 2032 0500

Ffacs: 029 2032 0600

Ffôn Testun: 029 2032 0660

E-bost: info@wao.gov.uk

Gwefan: www.wao.gov.uk