

RECREATION AND TOURISM REVIEW COMMITTEE

13th March, 2013

Present: Mr EA Sangster (Chairman)
Councillors JA Brinsden, P Harries, M James and R Owens, and Mrs M Thomas.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10.00am – 12.25pm)

1. Apology

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs L Jenkins.

2. Disclosures of interest

No disclosures of interest were received.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 21st November, 2012 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 21st November, 2012 be confirmed and signed.

3. Matters arising

(a) Coastal Tourism and Green Seas Projects Update – Minute 5

Councillor P Harries enquired about the on-going problem with regard to localised flooding at Newport Parrog. The Director of Park Delivery and Discovery replied that the Authority's Building Projects Officer would look into the matter and that he would report back to the next meeting.

NOTED.

(b) Tenby Centre and Associated Functions – Minute 10

Mrs M Thomas enquired as to the position regarding the strategic review of the Authority's Centres. The Head of Discovery confirmed that due to workload pressures the report would be completed by September 2013 rather than April 2013 as previously reported.

NOTED.

(c) Pembrokeshire Coast National Park 60th Anniversary Posters – Minute 12

The Director of Park Delivery and Discovery informed Members that the 60th Anniversary Posters had been nominated for a Chartered Institute of Marketing Award. Members passed on their congratulations to the Marketing Team and felt they had done a superb job with this campaign.

NOTED.

4. Performance report for the period April 2012 – January 2013

The Business and Performance Manager presented progress during the previous quarter on the key actions and success measures set out in the



Corporate Strategy outcomes 2, 6, 7 and some elements of outcomes 3 and 5 that were relevant to the work of the Committee using the Ffynnon Performance Reporting System. The system also showed the RAG (Red-Amber-Green) status for each action and/or measure. Actions relating to the Strategic Grant Letter were marked with 'SGL'.

Turning to the Measures set out in the report, the Business and Performance Manager stated that some of the surveys currently being carried out might not be undertaken in the future due to budget restrictions. In response to a question from the Chairman as to whether there was alternative means of getting the data, it was reported that web based surveys were being explored, although it might result in some data being lost in future.

It was noted that current visitor figures indicated an overall reduction of about 3.3% compared to the same period the previous year, although this figure was better than most other centres around the county, which showed a reduction of 10%. Having said that, income from merchandising generally showed an increase on last year.

Members enquired as to when they would receive the more in depth Risk Register requested at previous meetings and the Business and Performance Manager confirmed that a detailed report would initially be presented to the next National Park Authority Meeting which was to be held in April.

Members queried the fact that Carew Castle seemed to be missing from the Risk Register. It was explained that the risk in relation to Carew Castle had been due to planning issues (i.e. the continuing presence of the portakabins) but these had now been resolved. The Head of Discovery added that he was responsible for managing the smaller risks involved with the ongoing building project at Carew and that only main risks would be reported to Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the performance report for the period April 2012 to January 2013 be received.

5. Winter Work carried out on the Coast Path

The National Trail Officer provided an update for Members on work carried out on the Coast Path.

It was reported that the summer months of 2012 had been particularly difficult due to the very wet and humid weather which had led to very vigorous growth consequently resulting in the machines becoming choked up and being harder to use. In an ideal year, time would have been split evenly between cutting, repairing and renewing however in 2012/13 cutting had taken up 65% of team time.

Members were informed that approximately 60 signposts, 50 gates and 5 bridges had been repaired in the previous year. 51 stiles remained, although approximately 20 were being replaced with gates each year. Repairs to and/or renewal of path furniture was usually undertaken during the winter period, although some winter work had also involved dealing with cliff erosion.



Various WEFO funded projects had also been undertaken which included upgrading softwood gates to hardwood, restoring the steps at Skrinkle Haven and providing a bus to take school children to the Coast Path.

Future projects were to include supporting St Dogmaels Community Council in an effort to move the path off the road. Plans had also been drawn up for a stable crossing at Sandy Haven for which planning permission and funding was to be sought.

The National Trail Officer concluded by saying that, although Countryside Council for Wales funding had been reduced by £25,000 over the previous two years, the dedication of the area teams, together with the cooperation of the landowners year after year had made the Pembrokeshire Coast Path the outstanding success that had inspired the creation of the Wales Coast Path.

The Chairman referred to the joint Scrutiny Project that had been undertaken with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority on public rights of way and the discovery that the Authorities used different materials for their footpath furniture. He enquired whether there were any plans to change the furniture material used on the Coast Path in an effort to save money. The National Trail Officer informed Members that consideration was being given to switching to softwood and to using different styles of gates and a meeting was to be held in the future to discuss this. However, officers were conscious of the need to maintain the quality of the visitor experience and stated that this aspect would also have to be taken into consideration. Members asked to be kept informed of the situation.

Members also enquired as to why coastal erosion did not appear on the Risk Register but it was confirmed that it appeared on the register overseen by the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee.

Officers were then asked whether all stiles would be replaced with gates and Officers informed them that almost all would be changed except some in the northern section as they were on very steep ground.

The Director of Park Delivery and Discovery thanked the National Trail Officer for the hard work that had been done to maintain the Coast Path while dealing with the bad weather conditions and a reduction in budget.

It was **RESOLVED** that the presentation by the National Trail Officer on work carried out on the Coast Path be received.

(The Deputy Chair, Mrs M Thomas, chaired the meeting from this juncture as the Chairman tendered his apologies and left the meeting.)

6. Public Rights of Way Visitor Counters Report

The Access and Rights of Way Manager reported that Visitor Counters had been used on the Pembrokeshire Coast Path since 1990 to monitor the number of walkers using the National Trail. In order to determine the volume of use of the wider network of public rights of way in the National Park, seven electronic path user counters were installed on various public rights of way in June 2006.



The counters were distributed across the National Park at a range of locations which were sufficiently far from the Coast Path to ensure that their use was not attributed in part to the Coast Path. The counter locations were chosen to represent a sample of the varied landscape that could be accessed by public rights of way, giving a cross-section of the type of paths managed by the National Park Authority.

The counters took the form of body heat sensors or pressure pads which were concealed in the ground or in access furniture. They were supplied, installed and serviced by an experienced contractor who also collected the data and provided three reports a year.

The Access and Rights of Way Manager then took the Committee through the various data figures supplied by the counters. He informed Members that Visitor Counters represented only one form of monitoring to provide information on the volume of usage of public rights of way. Other data and performance measures were also in place.

He confirmed that the results were very encouraging and demonstrated that the network of public rights of way collectively accounted for a significant level of recreational activity, which was distributed across the National Park and helped to justify the National Park Authority's continued involvement in the management of public rights of way.

Members enquired as to whether the counters were placed on any paths accessible by horses and whether or not this would be recorded data. The Access & Rights of Way Officer said only one of the paths monitored was accessible by horse riders and cyclists but that this data was not recorded.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the Access & Rights of Way Officer be noted.

7. Update on the Mosaic Project

The Discovery Team Leader reported to Members that Mosaic was originally developed in response to evidence that, whilst ethnic minorities made up around 10 per cent of the national population, they represented only about one per cent of visitors to National Parks in England and Wales. The Mosaic project targeted urban areas with high levels of deprivation with the intention of building links between ethnic minority communities and their nearest National Park. Pat Gregory was the Mosaic Project Officer for Pembrokeshire Coast and was based in Cardiff.

Mosaic aimed to make sure that everyone had an equal opportunity to enjoy the National Parks. To do this, the project trained individuals from ethnic minority communities to become "Community Champions". These were volunteers who encouraged others to visit the National Parks through a range of activities which included organising and leading group visits, and 10 Community Champions had been recruited in 2012. Mosaic also aimed to encourage organisations such as National Parks to make changes in how they worked to reach new audiences. In Pembrokeshire the Mosaic Project sought to raise



awareness amongst ethnic minority communities in Newport, Cardiff and Swansea.

Members enquired whether the Welsh language was to be fostered with this project. The Discovery Team Leader explained that it was important to promote a cultural exchange in the groups, however promoting the Welsh language itself would be difficult with some groups as English was sometimes their second language so to introduce another language could create difficulties. Having said that, participants had shown that they were quite open to learning about other cultures and officers would be exploring means of building in more areas of culture, which could include music or food as well as language.

Members enquired whether there was scope, given that this was to be a family activity, for encouraging a connection between schools in the National Park and those in urban areas and officers said that this was something they would look into. They also expressed an interest in having one of the Community Champions address a future meeting of the Committee.

Members were very encouraged by the project and felt it was important to ensure that when the project came to an end in 2015 that the relationships built up would not be lost.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the Discovery Team Leader be noted.

8. Newport Visitor Centre

The Newport Visitor Centre Manger reported on recent progress at Newport Visitor Centre from an operational perspective.

Comparison figures for visitor throughput in the previous two years had shown that despite the economic downturn the number of people visiting the Centre was up by around 10.03%. The running costs of the Centre were relatively low and the total annual income for 2012 had remained roughly the same as for 2011 however spend per person had fallen by 10.34% which was felt to be predominantly due to the economic climate.

An internal audit of the Centre had been carried out in 2011. The audit report stated that financial controls at the Centre were satisfactory although there were a small number of areas where there was scope for improvement and all these issues had been addressed and new systems and procedures put in place.

The maintenance of the Centre was reported to be low with electricity and heating partially provided by solar panels and this was proving to be efficient. The Centre had close links with many local community groups and its small meeting room was used by them on a regular basis. It was hoped that the staff could work with more groups in the future in order to maximise the use of the meeting room and the Centre as a key community asset.

Members were pleased with the increase in visitor numbers.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Report of the Newport Visitor Centre Manager be noted.



9. Ranger Service

The Ranger Service Manager presented a review of the work of the Ranger Service following the first year as a standalone team since restructuring. The Ranger Service had been brought together into a single team within the Park Delivery Service, consisting of the Ranger Service Manager and five Area Rangers, each covering a defined area of the National Park – North, West and South. The Castlemartin Ranger was also based within the team, covering the military ranges of South Pembrokeshire. This post was funded in partnership with the Ministry of Defence and the Countryside Council for Wales.

The Ranger Manager explained that the core priorities of the team were local area and community work, recreation management and practical volunteering. Local area and community work ranged from providing advice and practical assistance to groups, through to helping communities enjoy the Park and celebrate local heritage and culture. The team also monitored and managed recreational use of the Park, helping to ensure that recreation was sustainable and did not cause conflict. The team was also responsible for managing the area of Crown Foreshore which was leased by the Authority. They also supported the work of the Access and Rights of Way Manager to promote and manage the access opportunities in their area in conjunction with the Area Warden Team.

The Ranger Manager went on to say that the Rangers contributed to the delivery of the education programme in conjunction with the Discovery Team, providing classroom and site based activities, advice and practical assistance to schools to use the outdoor environment and also delivered the majority of the Authority's Welsh medium education.

Part of their role was to support the Discovery Team to deliver the published programme of activities and events as well as meeting requests for walks, talks and other activities from communities and groups as well as being responsible for monitoring and working with organisers of large scale events to ensure they did not have a detrimental impact on the National Park.

It was reported that the number of Ranger contacts with school groups had decreased. This could partially be explained by the new Discovery Ranger team who took up post in 2011 and delivered a significant portion of the Education Programme.

In particular Rangers had focused on providing more opportunities for 'hard to reach' groups and those who faced 'barriers' to enjoying the National Park.

In conclusion, the Ranger Manager stated that bringing the Ranger Service together into one team had provided the opportunity for the Authority to review and focus more clearly on Park-wide priorities. As such, the service was better able to deliver the actions of the Authority's Recreation Plan and to work with partners on county-wide initiatives. She invited Members to come and see what the Rangers did on the ground. Councillor JA Brinsden urged Members to take up the offer; he had joined the Ranger Manager for a day and found it to be an excellent experience.



Members enquired about the Castlemartin Ranger position and whether or not funding was likely to continue towards this post. The Ranger Manager felt that this funding was secure as the Castlemartin Range was likely to stay open given the training facilities it provided.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Report of the Ranger Manager be noted.

10. Work projects at Carew Castle and Castell Henllys: update

a. Carew Castle

It was reported that the Authority had received funding from the Welsh Government and European Union to undertake some works to Carew Castle. A new roof had been erected on the Lesser Hall and these works had finished on time and on budget. Work was currently underway to convert a building in the Walled Garden to a new Visitor Centre and the portakabins which had housed the reception area, shop and office had been removed. The new Visitor Centre was due to open at Easter, following which work would commence to extend the hard standing of the car park. Plans for interpretation and landscaping in the Walled Garden would be brought to Committee in due course.

NOTED.

b. Castell Henllys

External consultants had been appointed to look at a project for Castell Henllys. It was felt that more use should be made of the existing building rather than using the farmhouse at the back of the site. A final report was due from the Consultants after which an Archaeological Review, a Service Review and a Surfaces Review would be completed and a works package decided upon. Works were to be undertaken in the winter months with funding due to be spent by Summer 2014.

Members enquired about the use of outside consultants and asked whether the work could have been undertaken in-house. The Director of Park Delivery and Discovery explained that the report was to be focussed on the use of technology for interpretation and the Authority did not have that level of expertise in-house. Some Members felt that it was wise to have a wider perspective.

NOTED.

11. Continuous Improvement Group: delegation of issues of concern

It was **RESOLVED** that there were no issues of concern that needed to be delegated to the Continuous Improvement Group for consideration.

