

REPORT OF BUSINESS & PERFORMANCE MANAGER

SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2014/15 - PART 1

Purpose of Report

To ask Members to approve the Improvement Plan 2014/15 Part 1.

Introduction/Background

Under the Local Government Measure, the National Park Authority is required to publish its Improvement Plan as soon as practical for the new financial year. The attached Improvement Plan presents the main activities planned for next year and summarises progress for the year 2013/14 with the latest available figures. These will be updated before the final plan is translated and published.

Financial considerations

No additional budget requirements

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 will be translated and published on the Authority's website.

Recommendation

Members APPROVE on the Improvement Plan 2014/15 Part 1.

Background Documents

None

(For further information, please contact Alan Hare)

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**Pembrokeshire
Coast National
Park Authority**

**Improvement
Plan Part 1
2014/15**

April 2014

Introduction

The National Park Authority delivers a wide variety of work that contributes to the vitality of the local area from conservation management and public access to local employment and affordable housing. The National Park Authority will continue to ensure that we meet the expectations of our customers, both residents and visitors, during a time of economic constraint. This document sets out our corporate priorities in the years ahead and sets specific targets for the National Park Authority to deliver in 2013-14.

Under Welsh Government legislation the Authority is required to publish an Annual Improvement Plan which sets out what improvements to its services, in terms of quality, effectiveness, access, sustainability and cost, it proposes to make. The Authority is fully committed to continuously improving its services.

Each year the Authority commences its forward work planning and budget preparation cycle in October in order to approve a balanced budget by February 15th. The Authority also prepares this document, a combined Corporate Strategy and Improvement Plan, which sets out its improvement objectives and which outlines what we plan to achieve over the next year.

The National Parks face growing and sometimes conflicting demands to deliver conservation, public access, local employment and affordable housing, at a time when resources are being constrained. In preparing this plan we have reviewed progress during 2013 and considered any changes in legislation or society in general which might affect our work.

However, in 2014/15 and 2015/16 the National Park Authority faces particularly difficult financial times with a reduction in the National Park Grant of over 12% and further reductions in other grant funding which can only result in changes to how and where our services can be delivered. During 2014, the Authority will undertake an extensive public consultation exercise to help inform how the delivery of the services may be changed to meet the curtailed finances available. The scope of this document is therefore limited to the period 2014/15 and is very much a continuation of the improvement plan for 2013/14.

The Improvement Plan sets out our vision, our role, and, in four improvement outcomes, what the National Park Authority (NPA) will achieve over the next year. All work or activity by our staff contributes to achieving one or more of the strategic outcomes.

How did we develop the improvement outcomes and objectives?

Although the NPA is a relatively small organisation there are many factors influencing its work. These include

- The statutory purposes as defined in the Environment Act 1995;

- The National Park Management Plan which sets out the long term vision for the National Park;
- The policy context provided by the new draft Policy Statement for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty produced by the Welsh Government;
- The Welsh Government’s Programme for Government;
- The Strategic Grant Letter issued by Welsh Government to the National Park Authority each year;
- The statutory role as the planning authority for the national park area and the policies set out in the Local Development Plan;
- Welsh Government’s sustainable development scheme One Wales: One Planet
- The Single Integrated Plan for Pembrokeshire
- Other Welsh Government legislation, policies and strategies such as the Environment Bill, draft Planning Bill and Future Generations consultation
- The resources available to fund activities
- Past performance
- Reports by Wales Audit Office on the National Park Authority
- Responses to surveys from residents and visitors

Members and staff of the Authority have been involved in determining the improvement outcomes for the National Park Authority.

Who did we consult?

We have consulted on previous Improvement Plans with staff, and key stakeholders including Welsh Government, Countryside Council for Wales (now National Resources Wales) and Pembrokeshire County Council. Information was also gained from the Pembrokeshire Citizens’ Panel, customer and staff surveys, and feedback from the biannual staff workshops which include group discussions on service topics. We are planning to carryout extensive consultation with residents, visitors and stakeholders during 2014 before setting our priorities for delivery within the reduced funding in future years. Further consultation on this Improvement Plan will be limited to key stakeholders, and with a copy posted on the web site for public comments.

Comments on this or for future versions of the Improvement Plan may be emailed to info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk with a subject of ‘Improvement Plan’ or in writing to PCNPA, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock, SA72 6DY

Background

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 an area of 612km², with approximately 23,000 people living in some 50 community council areas. At its widest, the National Park is about 16km wide and at its narrowest only 200m. Most of the National Park is in private ownership.

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 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 the above purposes the Authority has a duty to foster the social and economic well being of local communities.

As part of local government the Authority also contributes to many of the Welsh Government's wider goals for the economy, health, sustainability and social inclusion. In addition, the Authority meets the aspirations for better public services set out in policy publications including One Wales: One Planet and the emerging Living Wales Programme.

The Authority is the statutory planning authority for the National Park area and is responsible for the preparation of the Local Development Plan. Every five years the Authority is required to produce a National Park Management Plan which sets out how it would like to see the National Park managed not just by the Authority itself but by the other agencies and organisations whose activities might impact on the Park.

Funding

The Authority's net expenditure is determined by the Welsh Government, by allocating the annual National Park Grant and levy, which has been reduced by approximately 8.9% during 2014/15 at £4,307,108 with an additional capital grant of

£116,667. Further reductions in this and other grants means the Authority is facing an overall funding reduction in excess of 15% during the next two years.

When providing the funding, the Welsh 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.

This Improvement Plan sets out both the improvement objectives as required under the Local Government Measure and also our four corporate outcomes and is intended to:

- State our aspirations for the Park and how these may benefit people
- Guide our work and explain our priorities
- Inform our staff and key partner organisations
- Inspire and engage others to contribute to our desired outcomes
- Form the basis of our future business planning

Our Vision

Enthuse for today, enlighten for tomorrow, cherish forever

Our Role

To conserve the landscape, environment and culture, support community well-being and promote appreciation and enjoyment of the National Park.

The Improvement Outcomes we would like to deliver

The successful delivery of this strategy will lead to an improvement in the delivery of the following outcomes:

- 1 – The landscape, environment and culture of the National Park are conserved for current and future generations.**
- 2 – Residents and visitors from a wide range of backgrounds enjoy, appreciate and understand the National Park.**
- 3 – The work of the National Park Authority has a positive impact on the local economy and the well-being of residents and visitors to the National Park.**
- 4 – The National Park Authority, in consultation with residents, visitors and other partners, adapts to the reduced funding over the period 2014/2016 while still maintaining good governance, quality services, and value for money.**

Improvement Outcome 1 - The landscape, environment and culture of the National Park are conserved for current and future generations.

Introduction

We will use our resources, expertise and statutory powers to support and encourage those responsible for land and buildings to minimise the impact of climate change and implement sustainable development. We will promote the wide variety of local, linguistic, artistic and social cultures found within the National Park through our conservation, education and interpretation activities.

What are we trying to achieve? -

A special landscape

- Which is admired by everyone for its beauty
- Where the native species flourish
- Where local business benefits from the special qualities
- Where historic features are maintained
- Where the linguistic, artistic and social cultures are celebrated

Improvement Objective for Outcome 1

To complete the review of all the managed sites during 2014/15 and to revise the management regimes for any failing to meet their management plan objectives.

Where are we now

- Visitor surveys indicate that the natural environment is a significant factor to the visitor experience and their associated activities, with walking becoming increasingly popular and with many visiting the area regularly.
- During 2013 a review of all sites managed for conservation was commenced, to ensure the management regime was delivering the planned outcomes and data so far indicates success on over 70% of the sites reviewed. At present the National Park Authority manages directly or supports land owners to manage 1,632 hectares on 134 sites for conservation purposes and new sites are targeted to develop biodiversity corridors and extend zones.
- 17 grants totalling £100,000 have been awarded during 2013 for the improvement of historic buildings. Landowners are encouraged to conserve scheduled ancient monument sites although coastal erosion is probably the most significant cause of damage.
- The Oriel y Parc visitor centre promotes understanding of the landscape through the medium of art in partnership with National Museum of Wales and with exhibitions and residencies by local artists with over 30,000 people viewing the Gallery each year.

We will be succeeding in delivering this outcome when:

- a. The biodiversity on land managed by and in partnership with the NPA is improving over time
- b. There is a reduction in the number of Listed Buildings at risk;

- c. There is an increase in the number of people involved with cultural aspects of the National Park through archaeology, history, art and language related events.

We will take the following actions to deliver these Outcomes:

- a. Manage our own sites for conservation benefit;
- b. Encourage landowners and farmers to engage in agri-environment schemes, both national and local;
- c. Encourage sustainable development through our planning policies;
- d. Promote and support the artistic, linguistic and social cultures; and
- e. Encourage owners of historic and archaeological sites to protect them
- f. Complete the Community Orchard Project using Welsh Government Resilient Ecosystems Funding

How do we compare?

Although the majority of our managed sites are meeting the management plan objectives, in other areas of the National Park many species may be in decline due to factors including climate change and changes in land management. However, this is probably much less in Pembrokeshire than other parts of the UK as shown in local and national comparisons such as the State of Wildlife in Pembrokeshire and the National Farmland Birds Survey.

The percentage of listed buildings and archaeological sites at risk is similar to the average in the UK national parks.

Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2012/13	Target 2013/14	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Comparison/Comment
% of NPA managed sites which are in good and/or improving ecological condition & being managed in line with the managmt. plan		75%	70%	75%	No sites are considered as failing and most others are in the early stage of a management regime.
Area of land actively managed for conservation in partnership with NPA	1800ha (est)	1890ha	1632ha	1700ha	Area reduced during 2013 as review has identified sites which no longer require on-going management
Number of approved developments contrary to landscape protection policies		0		0	New indicator
% of listed buildings at risk		4%	4%	4%	Average in English NPAs – 3%
Number of people engaged through cultural events		30,000	Over 45,000	40,000	Includes Oriel y Parc Gallery, historic events and visitors to PCNPA stand at Urdd Eisteddfod (2013 only)

Improvement Outcome 2 - Residents and visitors from a wide range of backgrounds enjoy, appreciate and understand the National Park.

Introduction

We will promote access and provide opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy recreation and the natural, cultural and historic environment of the Park, and we will use the special qualities of the National Park as the basis for lifelong learning for all.

What are we trying to achieve?

Safe and accessible opportunities for public enjoyment and understanding of the National Park's special qualities by;

- Providing easy access to appropriate recreational activities free from barriers for all potential users
- Information and interpretation is easily available and accessible
- The resources and special qualities of the National Park are inspirational for life-long learning
- Engaging with under-represented groups to develop their understanding and appreciation of the National Park

Improvement Objective for Outcome 2

To develop a network of rights of way which are open, usable, suitably signposted, and in an acceptable condition with at least 80% of path network open and meeting the Authority's quality standard by March 2015.

Where are we now

The Authority maintains over 1127km of footpaths and bridleways, including the popular Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail. By the end of 2013 over 78% of the paths were open, usable and maintained to the Authority's quality standard. In addition, many lengths of paths (180km in total) are suitable for the less able with improved surfaces, removal of stiles, limited steps and gradual slopes, including 50km suitable for wheelchair users. Details of the wide variety of walks throughout the National park are available in publications and leaflets, with over 200 downloadable maps on the Park Authority's main website. The Authority also maintains over 50 sites, including car parks, giving access to walks and beaches in the area. Data available from fixed point counters indicate an increase of 8% on the coast path no change on inland paths compared 2012.

Over 250,000 people a year make use of the Authority's visitor centres and the Authority's website attracts more than 260,000 individual visits. A substantially improved 'Enjoy' website has been completed and may soon be adapted for mobile devices. 225,000 copies of the Authority's flagship visitor publication, Coast to Coast, are distributed every year and over 450 events attracting about 7,000 participants are organised to promote enjoyment and understanding of the National Park's special qualities. About 6,000 children visit Carew and Castell Henllys as part of the Authority's education service.

The National Park Rangers engage with over 2,000 school children and many volunteers providing over 1,500 opportunities for people with disabilities and from

other disadvantaged groups to become involved. The voluntary wardens have received practical training and awareness raising about the National Park.

The three Welsh National Park Authorities are working together in the MOSAIC Wales project to encourage more people from ethnic minority backgrounds to use the National Parks. During the first 18 months of the 3 year project, 56 champions had been recruited, at least one cultural event had been held in each Park, 492 people had visited the National Parks under the project and a further 600 introduced to the Parks through talks and presentations.

We will be succeeding in delivering this outcome when:

- a. Over 80% of the rights of way meet the Authority's agreed standards,
- b. The number of people using the path network is increasing,
- c. We engage directly with over 250,000 individuals, including at least 5,000 'hard to reach' participants through the Discovery and Ranger programmes, and via the Authority's visitor centres and attractions.
- d. The number of volunteers participating in the work of the National Park Authority increases and a wider range of opportunities for volunteers is provided.

We will take the following Actions to deliver these Outcomes:

- a. Maintain and improve the Coast Path, inland rights of way, and other paths;
- b. Develop interpretation, education, website and other media to promote the relevance of the National Park in addressing environmental and socio-economic concerns;
- c. Complete the Origins project at Castell Henllys interpreting the pre-history of the area;
- d. Engage with 'hard to reach' groups, at our centres and through a wide range of organised events including Mosaic Wales, and 'Your Park' activities;
- e. Recruit, train and support the development of new and existing volunteers and involve them in activities designed to conserve the National Park and enhance both their own experience and that of the other users of the National Park.

How do we compare?

By December 2013 approximately 78% of paths in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park were open and usable, similar to the Brecon Beacons National Park. The average in England's National Parks is 85% with the average across Wales estimated at about 55%.

Our extensive programmes of education activities and events exceed those of most of the other National Parks, although we wish to increase the opportunities for volunteers to be more actively involved in the Authority's work.

Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2012/13	Target 2013/14	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Comparison/Comment
% of RoW open & accessible meeting the quality standard	75%	85%	78%	80%	Wales average is 55%, top quartile is 75%
Number of people using footpaths (from fixed counters)	88,501	Increase	92,981	Increase	Data collected by 14 fixed location counters – (comparable 6 month data)
Number of volunteer events	214	200			New indicator
Number of volunteer days					
Total number of people using our Centres, Activities & Events, schools programmes	256,617	250,000	250,462	250,000	
Number of 'hard to reach' people engaging with the National Park	2,708	5,000	1,479 109 2126	5,000	Your Park, Mosaic, Rangers, Health

Improvement Outcome 3 - The work of the National Park Authority has a positive, sustainable, impact on the local economy and the well-being of residents and visitors to the National Park.

Introduction

We will encourage local businesses, in particular tourism and agriculture, to ensure a sustainable use of the resources of the Park in the development of their businesses. We will encourage the adoption of healthier and more sustainable lifestyles by providing easy access to recreation, and by promoting sustainable transport, renewable energy sources and the well-being of communities. We will use our planning responsibilities to assist in the provision of affordable homes.

What are we trying to achieve?

The National Park Authority's work is recognised as improving the economic and social well-being by

- Encouraging and supporting local sustainable business
- Promoting affordable and quality housing
- Engaging with local communities and encouraging volunteering
- Providing opportunities and activities which have a positive impact on health
- Promoting a clean and safe environment, and
- Promoting sustainable development

Improvement Objective for Outcome 3

To provide our services in a manner which supports and improves the socio-economic well-being of businesses, residents and visitors to the National Park.

Where are we now

A number of the services of the National Park Authority have a positive impact on the local economy. The landscape of the National Park, as protected by our planning policies provides the foundation for a tourism industry that supports hundreds of businesses. The Authority itself provides services such as rights of way, visitor centres, Coast to Coast and other publications and grant schemes that add value to the work of groups such as tourism businesses, recreation providers, farmers and builders.

In 2013 consultancy firm Ove Arup was commissioned jointly by the three National Park Authorities in Wales to investigate the economic value of Wales' National Parks. The report found that the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and the surrounding area attracts 4.2million visitors a year, supports over 7,000 jobs and contributes £187million Gross Value Added to the Welsh economy.

We also recognise that our socio-economic contribution is far broader than supporting the local economy. We seek to provide affordable housing through the planning system. The Scrutiny Committee determined that the impact of the affordable housing policies in the current Local Development Plan (LDP) were not delivering the expected results and made recommendations which are currently being taken forward.

In 2012/13 4% of housing permissions were for affordable units, although the number completed is restricted by a number of factors including the current economic climate. However, 2013/14 shows an improvement with 17% to date.

The Authority is a funding partner with Pembrokeshire County Council in local sustainable transport schemes and also supports many renewable energy proposals with 65% of planning applications for energy installations approved.

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) managed by the Authority on behalf of Welsh Government supported 17 projects during the year including 4 private sector businesses and 5 community projects.

The promotion of walking contributes to the health and well-being of the population. Volunteer projects and community engagement helps to break down social barriers, and the planning service ensures that there is a sustainable use of resources within the National Park.

We will be succeeding in delivering this outcome when:

- a. Over 20% of all planning approvals for housing will be for affordable homes
- b. The number of people using coastal buses, park and ride and similar schemes increases each year
- c. Complete the scrutiny of socio-economic project and take forward the recommendations.

We will take the following Actions to deliver these Outcomes:

- a. We will scrutinise the socio-economic impact of National Parks with Snowdonia NPA
- b. Prepare the annual monitoring report of the Local Development Plan
- c. Commence preparations for a review of the LDP taking the recommendations from the scrutiny of affordable housing provision into consideration
- d. Work with the Destination Pembrokeshire Partnership to encourage and support sustainable tourism businesses and promote Pembrokeshire as a resort
- e. Continue the ‘Walkability’ activities and provide other opportunities for improvement to mental and physical health.
- f. Continue financial support for Greenways bus services
- g. Deliver at least 15 small scale community projects through the Ranger service.

How do we compare?

It is not possible to provide comparison information on this topic as data on socio-economic well-being is not generally collected for the National Park area.

Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2012/13	Target 2013/14	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Comparison/Comment
% of new housing units which	20%	20%	17%	20%	

Measure	Actual 2012/13	Target 2013/14	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Comparison/Comment
are affordable					
Number of people using coastal buses etc	86,000	83,000	87,800	88,000	Target is subject to service continuing to be jointly funded with PCC
Number of people involved in health related events arranged by NPA	902	1,200	1,881	1,200	Walkability project

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Improvement Outcome 4 - The National Park Authority, in consultation with residents, visitors and other partners, adapts to the reduced funding over the period 2014/2016 while still maintaining good governance, quality services, and value for money.

Introduction

The Authority is facing significantly reduced funding over the next two years and probably for several years in the future. We must make strategic decisions to reduce the cost base of the Authority with the minimum practical reduction to services.

What are we trying to achieve?

To ensure that the Authority delivers the services required by residents, visitors and partners within the funding available.

The Authority will continue to

- Be open, fair and transparent in its decision making
- Provide value for money and quality services
- Work well with partner organisations
- Listen to and respect the views of local communities
- Contribute to reducing the impacts of climate change
- Be well managed and maintain a high level of governance, and
- Be recognised as a good employer

Improvement Objective for Outcome 4

To reduce the cost base of the Authority to within the limits of known funding.

Where are we now

With the reduction of the National Park Grant in each of the next two years and the possible loss of other grants from Welsh Government, NRW and Cadw, this Authority is faced with cutting its net budget by at least 15% before 2016. Cost cutting measures are already being implemented to introduce short term savings. A consultation strategy and action plan is being developed in preparation for the longer term implications of the funding reductions.

We will be succeeding in delivering this outcome when:

- a. The Authority sets and operates within its balanced budget
- b. We receive a favourable Corporate Review and Annual Improvement Report each year from Wales Audit Office;
- c. Customer satisfaction levels are maintained;

We will take the following Actions to deliver this Outcome:

- a. Undertake meaningful consultations with local residents and stakeholder groups
- b. Review the cost base and income potential for each service area
- c. Develop a longer term Corporate Strategy more closely aligned with Welsh Government social inclusion, child poverty and economic objectives

- d. Investigate alternative delivery mechanisms including joint working, out-sourcing and restructuring staff resources
- e. Prepare service plans based on a continuing reduction in funding

Miscellaneous and statutory Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2012/13	Target 2013/14	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Comparison/Comment
CO ² emissions generated by our energy and travel	374,620	417,500	255,032	363,400	Reduction of approx. 6% over same period last year
Member attendance at main committees	74%	75%	84%	75%	Brecon 84% SNPA 76%
Member attendance at training events	74%	66%	87%	75%	BBNPA 70% SNPA 73%

Statutory Indicators

Measure	Actual 2012/13	Target 2013/14	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Comparison/Comment
The number of working days/ shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) local authority employee lost due to sickness absence.	7	6	8	6	SNPA 13 BBNPA 7.4 Public sector average 8.1 Private sector 5.9
Number of planning applications registered	438		344		SNPA 296 BBNPA 311
The % of planning applications determined during the year that were approved.	83.5%		83.8%		SNPA 84% BBNPA 84%
The % of planning applications determined within 8 weeks	67%	70%	75%	75%	
% planning appeals supporting the NPA decision	63%		50%		14 out of 22 BBNPA 85% SNPA 61.5%
% of enforcement cases closed within 12 weeks	85%	85%	81%	85%	SNPA – 53% BBNPA - 22%
Number of enforcement cases outstanding for more than 12 weeks	92	80	81	80	BBNPA 140 cases outstanding
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		3 fte 66%	3 fte 66%		Welsh Language Scheme indicator
The percentage of staff who	25%	27%	27%		6 to ‘A’ level

Measure	Actual 2012/13	Target 2013/14	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Comparison/Comment
have received Welsh language training to a specific qualification level					34 to GCSE (Welsh Language Scheme indicator)
The number of complaints received in relation to the operation of the Welsh Language Scheme	0	0	0	0	Welsh Language Scheme indicator

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