

REPORT BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**SUBJECT: LETTER OUTLINING NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY PRIORITIES
2015-2016 FROM THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES OF
THE WELSH GOVERNMENT.**

Purpose of Report

To inform Members of the priorities for the Authority identified by the Welsh Government.

Introduction

The Chairman of the Authority recently received a letter from the Minister for Natural Resources outlining the priorities for National Park Authorities for 2015-2016 as identified by the Welsh Government. A copy of the letter is included as Annex A.

Financial

No financial information is provided. The Authority is waiting for final confirmation of its budget for 2015-2016.

Risk & Compliance Considerations

With the Authority receiving the majority of its funding from the Welsh Government, the need to ensure that its work programme reflects these priorities is important.

Human Rights/Equality Issues

No issues

Biodiversity Implications/Sustainability Appraisal

No issues

Welsh Language Statement

No issues

Recommendation

Members are invited to note the report and attached letter.

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol
Minister for Natural Resources



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Cllr Michael James
Chair
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Llanion Park
Pembroke Dock
Pembrokeshire
SA72 6DU

25 May 2015

Dear Michael

National Park Authorities Priorities 2015-16

The purpose of this letter is to highlight the priority areas on which Welsh Ministers would wish to see you focus effort in the year ahead.

It is my view that Wales' National Parks should be exemplars in natural resource management' embracing sustainable development by creating living, working landscapes with vibrant rural economies, thriving ecosystems and biodiversity and providing extensive recreation opportunities. As an Authority for these important areas I expect you to provide the necessary leadership and expertise, to deliver and bring about change. You can make a significant contribution to the green growth agenda in your work.

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 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. I expect you to ensure the broadest possible community participation in the development and reviews of the management plan for the Park, and that your services focus on engaging and developing opportunities for more economically challenged communities.

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

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The Welsh Government is committed to exploring ways of ensuring a living wage for every worker in Wales. I expect the Park Authority to contribute to this by working towards accreditation as a Living Wage Employer.

The “Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales” offers an opportunity to refresh and refocus the role of the designated landscapes to fit with the economic, environmental and social challenges that we currently face. I have already made a commitment to you that as a Government we wish to work in partnership with all park authorities to consider and respond to the recommendations that the Review will produce at the end of July. I believe that the case has already been accepted by us all that some reform is desirable. We will need to consider together what this looks like and how it is best delivered. With this challenge in mind, I have asked officials to develop a structured programme to support collaborative action across all the designated landscapes that will focus on the key areas that emerge from the Review, and I will want your Authority to fully participate in this programme.

This year there are a number of pieces of Welsh legislation with a direct bearing on the activities of the Park authority. I am very pleased that you have committed to being early adopters of the delivery of the “sustainable development principle” and of working towards the well-being goals set out in the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015). I will shortly introduce the Environment (Wales) Bill to put in place new statutory arrangements for the planning and management of Wales’ natural resources, as well as important statutory climate change targets. The new requirements will complement the role of the National Park Authorities and enable more effective and collaborative processes to be put in place to enable lasting social, environmental and economic benefits to be created for our communities. You have the opportunity to assist Natural Resources Wales in translating these requirements into practical action.

The Planning (Wales) Bill is now at a fairly advanced stage and you will be aware that it contains provisions that, subject to agreement of the National Assembly, would allow me to introduce changes to how planning decisions are taken in national parks. In the context of my commitment to making improvements to planning in Wales and the Review of Designated Landscapes, I firmly believe that national parks should not be left behind. An effective, transparent, consistent and enabling planning service is key to balancing the socio-economic needs of local communities. This includes the protection of landscape and the natural environment. 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.

A key commitment for the Welsh Government during 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. My colleague the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport, and Tourism has announced that 2016 will be the Year of Adventure in Wales and this provides an opportunity for the Parks to showcase not only the range of outdoor activities that are available but how public bodies should best plan for and manage such activities. Building on your expertise here, I am keen to see the Park

Authorities participate positively in our work to develop ideas for improving opportunities for responsible outdoor recreation through legislative and non-legislative means when I issue a consultation later in the year.

We have a great deal to do but I know your organisation has the ability and skills to help us achieve our challenging goals and I look forward to discussing your progress in these areas when we next meet.

Yours sincerely



Carl Sargeant
Minister for Natural Resources