

REPORT OF THE FINANCE MANAGER

SUBJECT: GRANT APPROVALS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 78 OF THE FINANCIAL STANDARDS (REVISED 2012)

Purpose of Report

Authorisation is required in accordance with Section 78 of the Financial Standards (2012) which states that where there is a payment of 'Total value Grant and Sponsorships under any one agreement over £10,000', approval must be obtained from the National Park Authority.

In the current financial year there are two payments which fall into this category: payment of £14,033 to Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum to help integrate and manage coastal activity and secondly a payment of circa £72k to Pembrokeshire County Council as a contribution towards the Pembrokeshire Greenways Partnership.

Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum

Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum has for more than 15 years brought stakeholders together - including government, statutory agencies, industry, local business and communities in order to identify coastal management issues and broker solutions. It is considered that the Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum is a cost-effective vehicle for delivery of work essential to achieving National Park purposes and the NPA's duty. In line with our approach to managing budget reductions we have reduced our contribution from £20K to £10K. This will continue to fund key activities such as:

- The Marine Code and Outdoor Charter initiatives;
- Wildlife Sightings Event
- Further development of Wales Activity mapping; and
- Agreeing and promoting good practice recreation guidelines.

Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum have also recently secured funding for a Recreational Audit for Disabled Access (RADA) project which aims to improve recreational opportunities for disabled people by identifying where barriers to access exist, exploring potential solutions to those barriers and providing an economic evaluation of those potential options. It will identify barriers along the supply chain, through working with relevant stakeholders, including the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group (POCG)ⁱ and Disability Sport Wales (DSW)ⁱⁱ. The project will cover 3 years and will be split into 3 distinctive areas:

Year 1 – Identify barriers for disabled access to recreation. This will be achieved through comprehensively surveying the POCG, in conjunction with support from DSW to develop the quantitative input for survey.

Year 2 – Assess and evaluate potential solutions for improving access through POCG members.

Year 3 – Provide an economic evaluation through costing and reporting on the possible solutions for providing better access to recreation by disabled users.

It is proposed that we provide £4,033 to match fund the first year of the project, which will provide 23% of the project cost for the year. This will contribute towards the delivery of our proposals to widen access to the National Park.

Pembrokeshire Greenways Partnership

The payment to the Pembrokeshire Greenways Partnership includes funding 50% of the Greenways Officer Post (the other 50% is funded by Pembrokeshire County Council), this amounts to £16,000. A further £56,000 of the budget is used as the Authority's contribution to the Coastal bus services. Of this amount £22,000 is used to fund the Coastal Bus Services two-days a week through the winter; £25,000 is used to fund the Celtic Coaster service through the summer. This service remains the most patronised service of all the Coastal Bus Services since 2010 with an increase 8% in passenger number in the 2014 season compared with the previous year.. In total the services carried 76,800 passengers in the 2014 season. The overall figure has decreased on previous years and is likely to be a result of the services operating for 1 day less per week during the winter due to the County Council's cost-saving budget cuts to public transport. The National Park Authority contributes approximately 15% of the overall cost of the Coastal Bus Services. The remainder is funded by Pembrokeshire County Council through its Local Transport Services Grant.

The services operate almost entirely within the National Park and as well as providing access to the majority of the coast for visitors also provide a service for residents which would not otherwise be sustainable. Until 2014 the National Park Authority funded the long-running Tenby Park and Ride service from The Salterns, alongside a second service operated by Pembrokeshire County Council, running from Butts Field car park. This service helps to reduce congestion in the town centre of Tenby and provides easy access for those using the car parks furthest away from the town centre. In 2014 it was operated on a commercial basis by Silcox bus company. The company advised they would not wish to repeat this in 2015 as it proved unviable for them to do so. Tenby Town Council has approached the County Council and National Park Authority to request that the service is again publicly subsidised. In discussions it has been agreed that the service operating from Butts Field car park should be discontinued and the two authorities pool resources to subsidise the Salterns service, along with contributions from Tenby Town Council and Kiln Park Holiday Park.

The remainder of the sustainable transport budget (£6,700) is used for publicity (Coastal Bus Services advertisement in Coast to Coast) and supporting other Greenways Projects with the other Partners such as Bikemobility.

Recommendation.

Both the above payments have been made over a number of years and as a result of the revised financial standards in 2012 members are asked to approve these payments.

ⁱ POCG is a partnership approach which includes local businesses, statutory and non-statutory organisations has been in existence for over 10 years. POCG is viewed as best practice nationally and contains all of the outdoor adventure business sector in the region with approx. 400 members.

ⁱⁱ The Disability Sport Wales National Development Programme is a joint initiative between Sport Wales, Disability Sport Wales and the 22 local authorities across Wales. The scheme is aimed at developing quality community based sporting and recreational opportunities for disabled people throughout Wales.