

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

6th May 2015

Present: Councillor M James (Chair)

Mr A Archer, Mr D Ellis, Ms C Gwyther, Councillor P Harries, Mrs G Hayward, Councillor O James, Councillor L Jenkins, Councillor R Kilmister, Councillor PJ Morgan, Councillor R Owens, Councillor D Rees, Mr AE Sangster and Councillor A Wilcox.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 11.00am – 1.00pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Hudson, Councillor RM Lewis, Mrs M Thomas and Councillor M Williams.

2. Disclosures of Interest

Mr A Archer disclosed a personal but not prejudicial interest with regard to item 23/15 the Draft Annual Governance Statement for 2014/15.

NOTED.

3. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed Mr John Lloyd-Jones a Member of the Panel which was carrying out the review of Designated Landscapes in Wales to the meeting and looked forward to the discussion on that matter which would take place later in the meeting.

The Chairman went on to outline some of the events he had attended on behalf of the Authority since its last meeting. These included attendance at the Keep Wales Tidy Green Key Awards, the Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership gathering and a Walkability introductory event in Newport. In addition he had attended a number of Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA) video conferences, one relating to the ANPA Finance and General Purposes Committee and several to sift and appoint Executive and Non-Executive Directors of the National Parks Partnership. He added that he would be travelling to the Peak District NPA the following week when final interviews for Non-Executive Directors would take place.

NOTED.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 25th March 2015 were presented for confirmation and signature.



One Member pointed out that under Item 19 Conservation Areas Review and the Consideration of Article 4 Directions, the creation of additional Conservation Areas at Nevern and Lawrenny had been discussed, however this was not reflected in the minutes. The Chief Executive replied that what had been agreed was that officers would investigate the possibility of the creation of Nevern and Lawrenny as Conservation Areas and a report would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th March 2015 be confirmed and signed subject to the above amendment.

5. Matters arising

- (a) Consultations in Conjunction with the Planning (Wales) Bill (Minute 4a)
The Chief Executive reported that the Planning (Wales) Bill had been considered by the Plenary session of the National Assembly the previous day when two amendments were proposed to the sections of the Bill relating to National Parks, one of which was approved. The debate to pass the bill would take place on 19 May and a report outlining its impact would be prepared after this date.

NOTED

6. Development Management Committee – Report of Meeting

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the meeting of the Development Management Committee held on 4th March 2015 be received.

7. Draft Annual Governance Statement for 2014/15

The Chief Financial Officer reported that the Annual Governance Statement provided the vehicle for demonstrating the Authority's success in delivering continuous improvement in performance, identified control systems and processes and highlighted significant governance issues to be addressed. Presentation of the draft Statement to the National Park Authority provided Members with an opportunity to contribute to and discuss its content. The format of the Statement was consistent across the three Welsh National Park Authorities and the final document would be presented to the Authority for agreement, along with Annual Accounts, in September.

Turning to Section IV, Actions taken during the year, one Member questioned the statement that there were no plans to make Authority meetings available as a webcast as he had highlighted the benefits of recording meetings previously and felt that officers should consider the options more fully. The Chief Executive replied that this statement did not reflect the current position as officers were looking at the options and would report to a future meeting of the Authority. With regard to testing the Disaster Recovery Plan it was reported that this was currently underway.



Regarding the following section V Review of Effectiveness of the six principles of the Code of Corporate Governance, one Member commented that he did not feel that the information provided under Principle 6 reflected the work that had been undertaken and asked that this be elaborated upon. Officers agreed that either further information would be added or a cross reference to other sections of the report could be inserted.

It was **RESOLVED** that the above comments be noted and incorporated within the revised Annual Governance Statement which would be reported to the National Park Authority later in the year.

8. Strategy Task and Finish Groups

Members were reminded that at the last meeting of the Authority the proposal to set up Member Strategy Task and Finish Groups was agreed. The paper before the Authority proposed generic Terms of Reference and the setting up two groups to:

- explore alternative ways of managing car parks owned or leased by the Authority; and
- explore potential changes to the provision of information to visitors, including the future roles of Tourist Information Centres and Visitor Centres.

Members asked that the Terms of Reference be amended to make it clear that the groups were advisory only, and that decision making remained with the National Park Authority, to which the groups would report on a regular basis.

A number of Members expressed concern that they had declared an interest in recent discussions on car parks and a member of the public might therefore consider that they had pre-determined their position on such matters. The Monitoring Officer advised Members to carefully consider their positions because of the public perception of being seen to put oneself or one's ward in a preferential situation, however he also pointed out that as a result of Section 25 of the Localism Act Members would not be precluded from sitting on a group due to the opinions they had expressed in the past, as long as they approached the matter afresh with an open mind.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) the Terms of Reference be agreed, subject to inclusion of a statement that the groups were of an advisory nature;
- b) a group be set up to look at the future management of car parks, the group to comprise Mr A Archer, Mr D Ellis, Councillors, P Harries, R Owens, P Morgan and A Wilcox;



- c) a group be set up to look at the future provision of information to visitors, this group to comprise Ms C Gwyther, Mr AE Sangster, Councillors L Jenkins, M James, R Kilmister and D Rees.

9. Natural Resources Wales – Consultation on Updates to River Basin Management Plans

The Head of Park Direction, in the absence of the Conservation Policy Officer, reported that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the Environment Agency had consulted on updates to the management plans for the three river basin districts affecting Wales. The catchments relevant to the National Park fell within the Western Wales district. Officers' comments sent in response to the consultation were attached to the report. Also appended was a note on the European Nitrate Directive and the nutrient status of the Milford Haven Catchment. This note was based on material supplied by NRW and explained that the catchment had 'Amber' status of being at potential for future classification as a candidate for Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) designation which would have both a direct and indirect effect on the National Park. If any such zone were to be designated, drafting would need to take place by the end of 2015 and officers would report further to Members with any updates.

Several Members were aware of the situation, having attended a workshop at which NRW had spoken in December 2014, and they were concerned at the possible designation of an NVZ. They asked what action the Authority was taking with regard to day to day involvement with the farming community and also welcomed the suggestion that a more centralised approach could be taken to anaerobic digestion of farm wastes and production of biogas. The officer replied that NRW was the lead authority in this situation, and such designation would raise many questions which the Authority would have to consider, however it was not certain that it would take place. With regard to the issue of anaerobic digestion, the Authority had included some advice in the Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Guidance and this could be reviewed. Other Members highlighted the importance of water quality issues continuing to be addressed particularly in the north of the National Park, and their impact on blue flag status which was very important to the tourism industry.

NOTED.

10. Night Sky Quality Survey 2015 – Final Draft

It was reported that the purpose of the Dark Sky Places programme was to recognise areas with dark skies and commit the relevant authorities to maintaining and improving them. Brecon Beacons National Park had become a designated Dark Sky Reserve and Snowdonia National Park was working towards becoming one.



Pembrokeshire Coast National Park did not lend itself to being a Dark Sky Reserve or Dark Sky Park because it is relatively small, ribbon-like and was affected by significant light sources on the Milford Haven. Instead officers had sought to identify a series of potential Dark Sky Discovery Sites across the National Park. These were described as small, accessible observation sites with good night sky quality. There was currently only one Dark Sky Discovery site in the National Park: the National Trust's car park at Broad Haven South. A spread of such sites could help raise the profile of the Park, not only for stargazers and photographers but as part of more general 'Park-at-night' type experiences potentially out of the main visitor season.

TACP Consultants had successfully bid for the work and were tasked with identifying a shortlist of ten potential Dark Sky Discovery sites within the National Park, and with providing some recommendations on protection and promotion of these sites, as well as of dark skies more generally in the National Park. Their report had been circulated to Members.

Subject to Members' endorsement of the Survey, it was proposed that it was circulated to and discussed with relevant land ownerships and interested parties by officers. This would allow partners to agree whether Dark Sky Discovery status should be applied for each and if so how each site would be promoted in a coherent way as part of the wider National Park recreational and visitor offer.

Members commended what they believed to be an excellent report, considering that the designation of Discovery sites would add to the enjoyment of the National Park. They asked whether officers could be more proactive in approaching major development such as the refineries and large harbours to ask if lighting levels could be reduced without compromising health and safety. Officers replied that lighting was a cost to all companies and it was thought unlikely that the energy would be used unnecessarily, however an approach could be made.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Sky Quality Survey be endorsed as a basis for discussion between the National Park Authority and partner organisations in putting forward Dark Sky Discovery Sites for designation.

11. Staffing Update

The Chief Executive reported that he had had a request from the Director of Park Direction and Planning to reduce her working hours to 3 days per week. He had agreed to this request although the situation would be kept under review. As a result, the Director would retain responsibility for Planning, while the management responsibilities for Park Direction would be undertaken by the Chief Executive.

NOTED.



12. Review of Designated Landscapes

The Chairman welcomed Mr John Lloyd-Jones, a Member of the Panel undertaking the review, to the meeting. Mr Lloyd-Jones began by outlining the recommendations made in Part 1 of the Review which he noted Members had considered at their previous meeting. Members expressed their concerns on some of these recommendations, and Mr Lloyd-Jones agreed to look into the points made. He then went on to outline the remit of the second part of the review. Written evidence for this was to be submitted by 31 May and the Panel would be receiving oral evidence during June, with the recommendations to be submitted to the Minister by 31 July. Members also provided some comments on Part 2 of the review and Mr Lloyd-Jones thanked them for these and looked forward to receiving further views from the Authority in the form of written and oral evidence.

NOTED.

