

REPORT OF BUSINESS & PERFORMANCE MANAGER

SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2014/15 PART 2

Under both Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and Wales Programme for Improvement, the Authority is required to publish an Improvement Plan Part 2 by 31st October. This reports on the progress against the work programme proposed in the Improvement Plan Part 1 for the year 2014/15.

Recommendation:

Members are requested to approve the Improvement Plan Part 2 for 2014/15

(For further information, please contact Alan Hare, Business & Performance Manager on extension 4810)



**Pembrokeshire
Coast National
Park Authority**

**Improvement
Plan Part 2
2014/15**

September 2015

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, support to tourism and the wider local economy, 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 2014-15.

Under Welsh Government legislation the Authority is required to publish an Annual Improvement Plan in two parts. Part 1 is published in April and sets out what improvements to its services, in terms of quality, effectiveness, access, sustainability and cost, it proposes to make in the current year. This Improvement Plan Part 2 looks back at the previous year ending 31st March and must be published by the end of October.

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. The Authority is fully committed to continuously improving its services.

However, in 2014/15 the National Park Authority faced the start of particularly difficult financial times with a significant reduction in the National Park Grant from Welsh Government and further reductions in other grant funding which will result in changes to how and where our services can be delivered. During 2014, the Authority undertook an extensive public consultation exercise to help inform how the delivery of the services may be changed to meet the curtailed finances available. This demonstrated widespread satisfaction for the Authority's services and in particular high-lighted the Coast Path and Oriel y Parc Gallery as important services.

Comments on this or other 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 8.9%

at £4,371,149 with an additional capital grant of £116,667. During the year Welsh Government reduced the grant by a further £144,667.

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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.

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

We are involved in managing 98 different sites, of which only 18 are owned by the Authority, covering 1,231 hectares and we completed monitoring in 92. 60% of the sites are considered as in good condition and meeting their conservation objectives and 34%, mostly relatively new sites, have not yet achieved their target condition but are progressing satisfactorily. The number of sites involved has reduced from 107 in the previous year as the review identified sites which no longer require our involvement and four new sites have been added.

Unfortunately we were unable to continue with the historic buildings grant as match funding is no longer available from Cadw. A resurvey of listed buildings by Cadw identified 40 buildings to be included on the Buildings at Risk register increasing the percentage at risk to 6.5%. Many of these can be rescued relatively easily and we will be advising the owners.

The Oriel y Parc Gallery 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. Over 144,000 people visited the centre during the year with over 29,500 people viewing the Gallery, and over 900 people attended historic culture events.

Historic Orchards Project

Several of the historic orchards in the National Park are suffering from lack of appropriate management to support a wide variety of plants and animals which are vital to the health of the wider ecosystem and increasing connectivity between sites.

Initially grant aided, this project now continues through the work of the area rangers and has resulted in over 200 new trees taken from stock of existing local heritage orchards. These have been propagated in a grow tunnel at the Pembrokeshire Mencap Stackpole Walled Gardens providing a stock of young trees for growing on and sale.

68 volunteers/orchard owners have benefitted from training in orchard management, fruit tree growing, pruning and grafting with practical support provided at 15 traditional orchard or fruit tree sites. Cuttings have been taken from heritage tree varieties and grafted for new planting. 18 events have been held for the public and volunteers with fruit pressing events, orchard management training and practical management work.

Cable Undergrounding Schemes

Over the past few years the Authority has successfully applied to Western Power Distribution for power line undergrounding schemes. These have made significant landscape improvements by undergrounding power and where relevant BT cables at Stumble Head, West Angle, Martins Haven, St Nons & last year at Caerfarchell. An application will also be made for a similar scheme at Treginnis Farm near St. Davids.

Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Actual 2014/15	Target 2015/16	Comparison/Comment
% of NPA managed sites which are in good and/or improving ecological condition & being managed in line with the management plan	70%	75%	60% Good 34% improving	75% overall	No sites are considered as failing and the improving sites are in the early stage of a management regime.
Area of land actively managed for conservation. NPA managed land Land managed in partnership with NPA	1636ha	1700ha	508ha 1152ha		No targets set but we will try to maintain the area as additions to management arrangements may be dependent on funding and appropriate opportunities and disposals occur when no further management input is required or at request of owners.
Number of approved developments contrary to landscape protection policies	0	No more than 2	3 out of 680	No more than 2	Authority is determining 99.6% applications in accordance with policy
% of listed buildings at risk	4%	4%	6.1%	<6%	County wide review by Cadw during 2014 identified additional buildings at risk. Average in English NPAs – 3%.
Number of people engaged through cultural events	Over 43,000	30,000	30,400	30,000	Includes Oriell y Parc Gallery, historic events.

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

During the year the Authority continued to maintain and improve the footpath network which now extends to over 1127km of footpaths and bridleways, including the popular 300 km long Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail. Over 85% of the paths are 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 (less than 50 remain on the National Trail), limited steps and gradual slopes, including 50km suitable for wheelchair users.

We try to encourage people to make use of the local paths with guided walks, publications and leaflets, and information is available on the Park Authority's website on over 200 walks including downloadable maps.

We use fixed point counters to provide a rough indication of the number of people using the paths and these show an increase of 30% from last year building on the 13% increase the previous year.

Several paths have been refurbished including a cliff top wheelchair path near Freshwater East with spectacular views across the coast line and providing a link between the village and the Coast Path. Near Newport a long term closed path has been reopened providing a popular circular route and a community link to the town and a path opened at Rhos y Felin accesses to a Bluestone excavation site.

Providing information about the Authority's work to residents, visitors and children plays an important part in both encouraging enjoyment and helping to conserve the Park. The Authority's five visitor centres were used by over 274,000 people and the Authority's website attracted more than 383,000 individual visits, both increases from previous years. 225,000 copies of the Authority's free flagship visitor publication, Coast to Coast, are distributed every year emphasising the National Park messages and supporting the local economy through promotion and advertising and this is also available in both English and Welsh as a downloadable app on mobile phones.

Almost 500 events attracting over 6,000 participants were organised to promote enjoyment and understanding of the National Park's special qualities. About 7,000 children visit Carew and Castell Henllys as part of the Authority's education service.

The National Park Rangers engage with over 2,700 school children and many volunteers providing over 1,700 opportunities for people with disabilities and from other disadvantaged groups to become involved.

Walking 4 Health

In 2012 a partnership was formed between PCNPA and PCC Leisure Services to support exercise referral patients who wanted to opt for walking as an alternative or addition to gym or pool sessions.

In the Autumn of 2014, the programme was extended, based at Fishguard Leisure Centre to target potential participants in the North of Pembrokeshire. The scheme was launched at the Pembrokeshire Cardiac Care Conference in November 2014 by the Walkability Co-ordinator to over 200 patients who were part of the Exercise Referral programme.

This enabled the participants who are all residents of Pembrokeshire to discover and explore new areas and try routes which they could use again for themselves, and also to incorporate individual's suggested favourites for the benefits of the others. Additional staff and volunteers have been trained as walk leaders to cope with the demand and there have been participants attending every fortnightly session offered so far, with an average into double figures happy to get out in all weathers.

The participants represent a wide spectrum of users including ex cardiac surgery patients, those recovering from injuries, some with additional learning needs, retired people trying to maintain a healthy level of exercise, individuals living alone seeking a compatible group with whom to walk, and ranging in age from post-school to late 80s. This group will continue to thrive and is likely to grow, and the feedback from participants is that it has encouraged them to walk at other times independently, one of the major aims of the Walkability scheme.

Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Actual 2014/15	Target 2015/16	Comparison/Comment
% of RoW open & accessible meeting the quality standard	78%	80%	85%	80%	Wales estimate is 55%, English NPA average 73%
Number of people using footpaths (from fixed counters)	141,831	Increase	187,253	Increase	Data collected by fixed location counters where comparable
Number of volunteer events	219	Increase	268	200+	
Number of volunteer days	1,874	Increase	1,970	Increase	English NPAs average 4,696 – many are close to areas with large populations
Total number of people using our Centres, Activities & Events, schools programmes	275,600	250,000	274,000	250,000	
Number of 'hard to reach' people engaging with the National Park	5,070	5,000	6,081	5,000	Includes Your Park 2119, Rangers SI – 1703, walking/health - 2259

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.

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

Many 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.

A scrutiny of the National Park Authorities' contributions to the local economies was undertaken jointly with Snowdonia, with evidence collected from 27 local businesses, 10 representative groups, 2 local authorities and local AMs and MPs. The final report is due to be published later in 2015, with initial findings suggesting that while there are concerns about the flexibility of planning policies and a need for closer engagement with businesses, there is also strong support for National Parks and the value of the National Park brand in promoting local businesses, both large and small.

Tourism is vital to the economy in Pembrokeshire. It presently sustains approximately 16,000 estimated full-time jobs and generates in excess of £570 million per annum¹. Tourism also underpins the economic viability of local services and businesses that are vital to the sustainability and well-being of local communities within the National Park. For this reason, PCNPA works closely with Destination Pembrokeshire which is the local partnership responsible for setting the vision and strategy for tourism development in the county. The partnership includes representatives from Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Pembrokeshire Tourism and Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development (PLANED). Destination Pembrokeshire is responsible for liaising with local stakeholders and Visit Wales to create and deliver the Destination Management Plan for Pembrokeshire 2013-2018.

The work of Destination Pembrokeshire forms a cornerstone of the Local Service Board's commitment to foster "a competitive, productive and sustainable economy" as set out in the Pembrokeshire Single Integrated Plan (SIP) 2013-2018. PCNPA's involvement in the work of Destination Pembrokeshire has helped to foster improved business links locally, has ensured that the needs of our National Park communities are reflected within the tourism strategy for Pembrokeshire and, ultimately, has helped to utilise the sustainable management of the National Park as a 'lever' to support localised tourism growth.

¹ Extracted from PCC report to Cabinet

Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Actual 2014/15	Target 2015/16	Comparison/Comment
% of new housing units which are affordable	19%	20%	60%	Subject to review of LDP	BBNPA – 16%, SNPA 51%. 30 affordable housing units approved at 3 large sites. Previously most applications were for single dwellings resulting in just financial contributions. £52,338 collected from S106 agreements.
Number of people using coastal buses etc.	86,000	83,000	64,532	Increase but may be subject to changes in service levels	The Celtic Coaster Service around St Davids was reduced from 3 vehicles to 2 vehicles. The Coastal Cruiser service running between Pembroke, Freshwater East and Angle was reduced from 2 vehicles to 1 vehicle. These changes reduced the frequency of the service.

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.

Improvement Objective for Outcome 4

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

Where are we now

Consultations held with the local communities during 2014 demonstrated widespread support for the National Park services, in particular the Coastal Path and Oriell y Parc visitor centre.

While precise budget planning figures have not been provided by Welsh Government, the Authority anticipates a reduction of the National Park Grant in each of the next two years and the probable reduction of funding from other sources will result in a cut in the net budget of at least 15% by 2016/17.

During a series of workshops the Authority Members reviewed service provision and options for potential cost savings. A number of these have been further investigated although the nature of the Authority’s services and property holdings mean none can be delivered quickly or without ongoing commitments and cost implications. Discussions about sharing a building with a local library have not been successful, although a possible community asset transfer is being considered. Further joint working with other local authorities is likely to be introduced during 2015/16.

By reviewing staff posts at every opportunity provided by early retirements, voluntary redundancies and resignations, the Authority has reduced its staffing by over 10 ftes in the past 2 years with so far only marginal reduction in frontline services. Staff costs continue at only 53% of the reduced net budget.

Miscellaneous and statutory Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Actual 2014/15	Target 2015/16	Comparison/Comment
CO ² emissions generated by our energy and travel	353,523	343,000	371,017	360,000	Increase of 4.9% - caused in part by biomass boiler out of use for month of January and two additional sites.
Member attendance at main committees	83%	75%	89%	75%	Brecon 84% SNPA 76%
Member attendance at training events	74%	75%	72%	75%	BBNPA 70% SNPA 73%

Statutory Indicators

Measure	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Actual 2014/15	Target 2015/16	Comparison/Comment
The number of working days/ shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) local authority employee lost due to sickness absence.	8	6	8	6	SNPA 9.3 BBNPA 13.7 English NPAs range from 2.6 – 9.2 PCC 10.2 Public sector average 7.9 Private sector 6.6
Number of planning applications registered	434		680		SNPA 511 BBNPA 403
The % of planning applications determined during the year that were approved.	87%		95%		SNPA 90% BBNPA 90% English NPA avg 91% Only 4 applications (0.6%) were approved contrary to recommendation.
The % of planning applications determined within 8 weeks	76%	70%	85%	75%	BBNPA 77% SNPA 74%
% planning appeals supporting the NPA decision	47%		79%		11 out of 14 BBNPA 44% SNPA 77%
% of enforcement cases closed within 12 weeks	70%	85%	70%	68%	SNPA – 64% BBNPA - 85%
Number of enforcement cases outstanding for more than 12 weeks	84	80	84	55	
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	66%	66%	66%	66%	28% of the staff are able to speak Welsh, an increase from 25% last year. 7 staff undertook Welsh language training during the year.
The number of complaints received in relation to the operation of the Welsh Language Scheme	0	0	0	0	Welsh Language Scheme indicator