

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

29th July 2015

Present: Councillor M James (Chair)
Mr A Archer, Mr D Ellis, Councillor P Harries, Mrs G Hayward,
Councillor ST Hudson, Councillor Mrs L Jenkins, Councillor R
Kilmister, Councillor RM Lewis, Councillor PJ Morgan, Councillor R
Owens, Mr AE Sangster, Mrs M Thomas, Councillor A Wilcox and
Councillor M Williams.

*[Councillor ML Evans and Ms C Gwyther arrived during
consideration of the Draft Statement of Accounts (Minute 6 refers)]*

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10.00am – 12.15pm)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor D Rees.

2. Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on the 17th June 2015 (AGM and Ordinary Meetings) were presented for confirmation and signature.

The Chief Executive apologised that in the minutes of the AGM, membership of the Standards Committee was incorrectly recorded. Mrs J Wainwright had been appointed as an independent Member of the Committee, and Mr J Evans had resigned. It was also pointed out that Councillor R Owens' name should replace that of Councillor M James.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) the minutes of the AGM held on the 17th June 2015 be confirmed and signed subject to the above amendments;
- b) the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Authority held on 17th June 2015 be confirmed and signed.

4. Matters arising

Minute 7 (NPA Ordinary Meeting) – Proposed sale of the Lime Keepers Cottage, The Parrog, Newport

The Chief Executive reported that Welsh Government had advised that they were happy for the building to be disposed of at below market value.

NOTED.



5. Reports of meetings of various of the Authority's Committees

The following reports of meetings of a number of the Authority's Committees were presented to Members for consideration/information:

- (i) Development Management Committee held on the 27th May 2015 and 17th June 2015;
- (ii) National Parks Joint Scrutiny Group on the economy held on the 6th May 2015 and 8th July 2015;
- (iii) Operational Review Committee held on the 1st July 2015;

It was **RESOLVED**:

- (a) that the report of the Development Management Committees held on the 27th May 2015 and 17th June 2015 be received, and
- (b) that the reports of the National Parks Joint Scrutiny Group on the economy and Operational Review Committee held on the dates referred to above be adopted.

6. Draft Statement of Accounts 2014/2015

The Finance Manager began by explaining the process for agreement of the accounts. He had authorised release of the Draft Statement of Accounts to Audit on 30th June 2015. The Draft Statement of Accounts was made available for public inspection on the 1st July 2015 and was reported to the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee on 15th July 2015. The audited set of Statement of Accounts would then be presented to Members on the 23rd September by the Wales Audit Office and would be signed off by the Chairman and the Chief Executive.

It was reported that the summarised accounts showed that both revenue funding and the capital budget were down on the previous year, due mainly to a reduction in the National Park Grant and therefore the Levy. However locally generated income was up in most streams. He pointed out that the reduction in timber sales was due to a change in accounting treatment as internal sales had been included in the figures in previous years which was now contrary to best practice.

Turning to expenditure, the main cost related to employees, and this figure was up slightly due to settlement costs of employees who had left the Authority through redundancy and early retirement. Salary costs were down by £105,000 in response to the current financial climate. The Chief Executive added that the policy on exit packages was to generate a payback in less than four years. However, in the majority of cases the payback period was significantly less. The figures for supplies, services and grants had reduced due to loss of the Planning Improvement Fund Grant, a reduction in the Sustainable Development Fund allocation and a



reduction in the amount spent on advertising planning applications through use of a different newspaper.

The Authority's revenue account showed that the net cost of services had been under budget and a summary of the main reasons for the variances for each service were provided. Deducting the National Park Grant and the Levy showed that the Authority had ended the year with a net operating surplus. There had also been a net transfer to earmarked reserves, and reserves for car park resurfacing, National Park Grant reduction and the Sustainable Development Fund had been added.

The Capital Programme was down when compared to 2013/14, with the main cost being on the Origins project, for which all grant monies had now been claimed and paid out. Smaller sums had been paid for the Sandy Haven river crossing (for which a Welsh Government Access Grant had been received), vehicles and for replacement windows at Llanion.

With the exception of the Pension Reserve the condensed balance sheet showed no significant movements when compared to 2013/14. The fixed assets had reduced due to revaluations, and the figure for debtors was up due to grants that were outstanding at the end of the financial year, however these had subsequently been paid. Conversely the money owed by the Authority had reduced, the figure for 2013/14 being higher due to ongoing bills relating to the Origins project. There had been an increase in the pension liability due to falling discount rates.

Members asked a number of questions, including those on the figures regarding valuation of heritage assets and on investment properties and explanations were provided by the Finance Manager.

NOTED.

7. Local Development Plan Review Regulations Update

The Head of Park Direction reported that at a recent meeting with Welsh Government officials she was advised that the Local Development Plan regulations and guidance would be laid before the National Assembly for Wales in early August 2015. Once laid they would be available to view on the Assembly's website. Until the date the regulations came into force at the end of August they would be subject to change.

She went on to explain that officers had been progressing work for the Local Development Plan review in anticipation of publication of the new regulations, and it was proposed to carry out a series of workshops with Members over the summer so that the Plan Review Report could be completed. As part of these, stakeholder engagement on the Review



Report would be discussed. The first of those workshops was scheduled for that afternoon when further details would be provided.

Members were glad to see that there was some progress in publication of the regulations and that work on the Authority's own review had already commenced.

NOTED.

8. Carew Mill – New Roof

The Building Projects Officer reported that the roof structure and covering at Carew Mill had been closely monitored as part of the annual maintenance programme, however over recent years the roof had deteriorated considerably and during this time minor leaks had been sealed on an ad hoc basis at considerable expense, due to access to the roof being problematic because of its considerable height and lack of access to the West facing elevation. In order to prevent further damage and preserve the structure internally, it was recommended that the roof was replaced.

One Member was concerned regarding the high cost of the project and asked whether it would be possible to re-use existing slates. Officers replied that having inspected the roof from the inside, it was not considered that a significant proportion could be re-used, however re-use could be investigated. Sound slates would in any case be salvaged for sale.

Other Members felt that the estimate seemed reasonable given the extent of the roof and the amount of scaffolding required, however they asked about the tendering process that would be undertaken. The officer replied that it was a 2 stage process whereby expressions of interest would be sought on Sell-to-Wales. These would be scored, and from them a shortlist of 6 would be invited to tender for the project.

It was **RESOLVED** that the capital project to replace Carew Mill roof be approved.

9. Investors in People

It was reported that the National Park Authority had attained the Investors in People (IiP) award in 2000 and had retained it at 3-yearly reviews since then. The time for the next review was approaching, and the report sought Members' views on whether the cost and time taken in seeking this external accreditation remained cost effective. Reassurance was provided that in any decision to withdraw from the award, the Authority would retain its commitment to the principles and practices that had become embedded and that no practices or resources would be withdrawn or reduced as a consequence. Staff had also been consulted



with some feedback for and against retaining the award, the majority in favour of withdrawing from the award.

While some Members were happy that as long as the principles of liP were embedded within the organisation, there was no need to reapply for the award, they drew officers' attention to an award which invested in diversity and felt that this would be worth investigation. Other Members, however felt that re-applying for the award would be useful and beneficial to the organisation as it aligned staff performance with organisational objectives. They asked that if retention of the award was not sought, Members were provided with an outline of the principles and practices in place and kept informed of the outcomes.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Authority should not continue to seek Investors in People accreditation from 2015 onwards.

10. Welsh Government Green Paper Consultation: Improving Opportunities to Access the Outdoors for Responsible Recreation

It was reported that Welsh Government had recently published the above mentioned Green Paper, a copy of which had been provided for Members. In it the Welsh Government acknowledged the social, economic and health benefits of countryside access and set out a number of principles in its vision for access and outdoor recreation. In order to deliver these objectives a number of key proposals were put forward. The proposals for change were divided into three main sections: access to land, access to inland water and access to coastal waters and the sea. The proposal to develop a new Statutory Code to replace the Countryside Code was also briefly discussed.

The National Park Authority strongly supported the commitment by Welsh Government to provide a greater range of access opportunities to the countryside of Wales and increase participation levels for a wide range of outdoor activities. While officers welcomed some of the proposals, such as an overhaul of procedures, the benefits of other elements were less certain, and the response to the consultation would need to be supported by the evidence of experience. Officers advised that the Authority would be working with Snowdonia and Brecon National Park Authority to produce a three Park response, as well as holding discussions with the Pembrokeshire Local Access Forum, in order to inform the Authority's response.

Thanking officers for a good report, Members agreed with the general principle of responsible recreation and the need for education of the public in this regard, however a variety of views were expressed on many of the proposals in the document. It was suggested that a workshop to discuss the Green Paper might be helpful and the Access and Rights of Way Manager suggested that Members attend the Local Access Forum



meeting on 4th September at which a range of local groups would be represented. It was hoped that the three Park response would be reported to the meeting of the Authority on 23 September.

NOTED.

11. Proposed Undergrounding of Existing Overhead Power Lines: Treginnis Farm. St Davids and Dinas Head

It was reported that Western Power Distribution had extended its power line undergrounding scheme into their current 8 year business plan by allocating a further £1.3m to fund the undergrounding of those sections of their existing overhead electrical supply network which were considered the most damaging to the special qualities of four protected landscapes, i.e. the Gower and Wye Valley AONBs and the Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire Coast National Parks. Members were reminded that the Authority had already successfully delivered five landscape improvement schemes during the period 2010/15 at Strumble Head, West Angle, Martins Haven, St Nons and Caerfarchell.

Schemes were now being proposed at Treginnis Farm, St Davids and Dinas Head and details of these, and the benefits of undertaking such work, were set out in the report. Officers considered that these represented an outstanding opportunity to achieve permanent visual benefits within two of the National Park's most iconic locations with the use of 100% external funding. Subject to obtaining any necessary/legal consent, the actual work on site would be undertaken by Western Power Distribution and could be completed during 2015/16.

Members welcomed the schemes but asked whether Western Power Distribution could be encouraged to invest more on work such as this, noting other areas that could benefit from undergrounding cables. Officers replied that there was resistance to this from stakeholders as the work was funded by bill payers. Also some schemes required the undergrounding of telephone as well as electricity cables to achieve greatest benefit and BT had not allocated a budget for undergrounding cables.

It was **RESOLVED** that the opinion of officers set out in the report and attached selection criteria be endorsed, and ongoing work towards securing the delivery of undergrounding schemes at Treginnis Farm, St Davids and Dinas Head as soon as reasonably possible be authorised.

[Mr T Sangster tendered his apologies and left the meeting at this juncture.]



12. Final Report on the Mosaic Cymru Project

It was reported that the aim of the Mosaic project had been “to cement long-term sustainable engagement between black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and National Parks in Wales”. The project had started in January 2012 and came to an end in March 2015 and was led by the Campaign for National Parks (CNP) working in partnership with the Youth Hostels Association and the three National Park Authorities in Wales.

The rationale for the Mosaic Cymru project was that ethnic minority people are significantly under-represented among visitors to all the National Parks in England and Wales. The National Parks have a statutory responsibility to promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the National Parks. The Mosaic model therefore centred on the concept of Community Champions, individuals who were recruited from ethnic minority communities in urban areas located near to the National Parks. Champions were trained in a range of skills that would equip them to promote the National Parks within their local communities.

Attached to the report before Members was the Mosaic Wales Project Report which provided an evaluation of the whole project and included evaluative work undertaken by the Gilfillan Partnership who were employed as external evaluators by CNP.

Finally, the report set out the future plans for Mosaic in the National Park which included a succession plan, which committed the Authority to providing support to Mosaic Champions together with a small budget to enable activities to take place, and details of a bid prepared by the CNP for a successor project to Mosaic Cymru.

Members were pleased to hear of the success of such an excellent project and supported the work to keep the initiative running through the succession plan and successor project. They also felt that greater publicity should be given to the social inclusion work carried out by the Discovery team.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted and support be given to continuation of the Mosaic project.

13. Committee Membership

The Administration and Democratic Services Manager reminded Members that at the Annual General Meeting it was reported that consideration of the membership of the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee, Grievance Committee and Appeals Committee would be confirmed once the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Authority and other relevant Committees had been appointed. The necessary appointments



had now taken place and a suggested composition for these Committees was set out in the report.

It was **RESOLVED** that membership of the Committees be confirmed as follows:

Investigating and Disciplinary Committee

Councillor M James, Chair, National Park Authority

Mr A Archer, Deputy Chair, Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee

Ms C Gwyther

Councillor P Harries

Councillor R Owens

Grievance Committee

Councillor M Williams, Chair, Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee

Councillor RM Lewis, Deputy Chair, Development Management Committee

Mr AE Sangster

Mrs M Thomas

Councillor A Wilcox

Appeals Committee

Mrs G Hayward, Chair of Development Management Committee

Mr D Ellis, Deputy Chair, National Park Authority

Councillor Mrs Lyn Jenkins

Councillor PJ Morgan

Councillor D Rees

14. Welsh Language Standards: Consultation on Compliance Notice [Section 47 Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011]

It was reported that the above mentioned Measure established a framework for introducing duties on persons to comply with statutory standards relating to the Welsh language. The standards would replace the current system of Welsh language schemes established under the Welsh Language Act 1993. During the last 18 months, the Welsh Language Commissioner had provided several opportunities for interested parties to provide evidence and to state their views on the standards.

The Welsh Language Standards Regulations (No 1) 2015 came into force on 31 March 2015 and authorised the Welsh Language Commissioner to issue a compliance notice requiring organisations to comply with one or more of the standards that were specifically applicable to them. The Authority had received a draft compliance notice on 26 June, and this was appended to the report. It now had the opportunity to comment as to



whether the standards included within the notice were reasonable and proportionate and Members' views were sought on the draft response which had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was reported that an extension to the consultation deadline had been granted to allow consideration of this report by the National Park Authority.

The Administration and Democratic Services Manager stated that the Authority already complied with many of the standards, while measures to comply with others could be introduced fairly easily, however some would prove more challenging in terms of timescale, bureaucracy and resource implications. The Chief Executive added that the Authority was at a disadvantage in that due to its size, some services were delivered by one specialist officer rather than a team of people, and many of these were not Welsh speakers; however he had spoken to the Welsh Language Commissioner and believed she was taking a pragmatic approach towards compliance, particularly with regards to timescales.

While wishing to support the Welsh Language, some Members were concerned about the cost of implementation at a time of budget constraint and also the capacity of the Welsh translation sector to undertake the work. However there was support for the direction of movement provided by the Regulations.

It was **RESOLVED** that the consultation response form for the draft compliance notice issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner in accordance with Section 47 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 be agreed subject to the above comments.

[Councillor M Williams tendered his apologies and left the meeting during consideration of the following item.]

15. Final Report and Findings of the National Parks Joint Scrutiny Group on the Economy

The Chair of the Joint Scrutiny Group, Mrs Gwyneth Hayward, introduced the report and outlined some of the issues raised by those who had provided evidence to the Group. She thanked the Group Members, particularly Mr Ted Sangster, who had worked hard to achieve the report, as well as the officers of both Authorities for their support.

Members of the Group wished to add their thanks to Mrs Hayward for her hard work in producing the report. They also noted that they had learnt a lot, including the importance of fostering better relationships with stakeholders, and particularly of listening to what they had to say. The importance of developing a Stakeholder Engagement Policy was highlighted and it was requested that a report be prepared on this for a future meeting of the Authority. Members also felt the scrutiny report



would be valuable when reviewing the Local Development Plan over the coming months.

Mrs Hayward concluded by saying that she would be speaking to officers regarding an action plan to take forward the recommendations set out in the report, with progress on this to be reported to a future meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the final report and findings of the National Parks Joint Scrutiny Group on the Economy be endorsed.

