

## REPORT OF BUSINESS & PERFORMANCE MANAGER

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### **SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2015/16 - PART 1**

#### Purpose of Report

To ask Members to approve the Improvement Plan 2015/16 Part 1.

#### Introduction/Background

Under the Local Government Measure, the National Park Authority is required to publish its Improvement Plan as soon as practical for the new financial year. Much of the plan is carried over from 2014/15 and Members commented on a draft Improvement Plan at a previous meeting. Those comments have now been included as follows –

- Following discussion with the Authority's Biodiversity Officer the area of land being managed for conservation now shows the area of Authority owned land as well as the area being managed in partnership
- Inclusion of research into a dark skies designation
- Correction of the % of affordable homes approved with any future target being dependant on the outcome of the current review of the LDP.
- The target to increase the number of users of the coastal bus service is subject to continuing levels of service provision
- More planning applicants will be encouraged to make use of the pre-application enquiry service

#### Summary Findings

Members are asked to approve the Improvement Plan Part 1 for 2015/16.

#### Financial considerations

All projects indicated in the Improvement Plan are within the approved budget.

#### Risk considerations

No additional risks are involved.

#### Compliance

Required to comply with Local Government Measure.

#### Human Rights/Equality issues

None.

#### Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

None

Welsh Language statement

The approved document will be translated and published on the Authority's website.

**Recommendation**

**Members APPROVE the Improvement Plan 2015/16 Part 1.**

Background Documents

None

*(For further information, please contact Alan Hare)*

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**Pembrokeshire  
Coast National  
Park Authority**

**Improvement  
Plan Part 1  
2015/16**

March 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 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 and sets specific targets for the National Park Authority to deliver in 2015-16.

Under Welsh Government legislation the Authority is required to publish an Annual Improvement Plan which sets out what improvements to its services, in terms of quality, effectiveness, access, sustainability and cost, it proposes to make. The Authority is fully committed to continuously improving its services.

Each year the Authority commences its forward work planning and budget preparation cycle in October in order to approve a balanced budget by February 15<sup>th</sup>. The Authority also prepares this document, a combined Corporate Strategy and Improvement Plan, which sets out its improvement objectives and which outlines what we plan to achieve over the next year.

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. In preparing this plan we have reviewed progress during 2014 and considered any changes in legislation or society in general which might affect our work.

However, as part of local government, the National Park Authority faces particularly difficult financial times over the next few years with reductions in the National Park Grant expected and further reductions in other grant funding which can only 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. The scope of this document is therefore limited to the period 2014/15 and is very much a continuation of the improvement plan for 2013/14.

The Improvement Plan sets out our vision, our role, and, in four improvement outcomes, what the National Park Authority (NPA) will achieve over the next year. All work or activity by our staff contributes to achieving one or more of the strategic outcomes.

### How did we develop the improvement outcomes and objectives?

Although the NPA is a relatively small organisation there are many factors influencing its work. These include

- The statutory purposes as defined in the Environment Act 1995;

- The National Park Management Plan which sets out the long term vision for the National Park;
- The policy context provided by the new draft Policy Statement for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty produced by the Welsh Government;
- The Welsh Government’s Programme for Government;
- The statutory role as the planning authority for the national park area and the policies set out in the Local Development Plan;
- Welsh Government’s sustainable development scheme One Wales: One Planet
- The Williams Commission Report into Local Government
- Review of Protected Landscapes by Welsh Government
- The Single Integrated Plan for Pembrokeshire
- Other Welsh Government legislation, policies and strategies such as the Environment Bill, Planning Bill and the Future Generations Bill
- The resources available to fund activities
- Past performance
- Reports by Wales Audit Office on the National Park Authority
- Responses to surveys from residents and visitors

We considered revising the four corporate outcomes, but with the current review into Protected Landscapes in Wales due to report in two phases in 2015 and the possible local government reorganisation it was decided retain the outcomes unchanged.

#### Who did we consult?

We have consulted on previous Improvement Plans with staff, and key stakeholders including Welsh Government, now National Resources Wales and Pembrokeshire County Council. Information was also gained from the Pembrokeshire Citizens’ Panel, customer and staff surveys, and feedback from the biannual staff workshops which include group discussions on service topics.

During the autumn of 2014 a consultation exercise about the impact of the budget constraints involved residents, visitors and local community councils using web surveys, public meetings, response cards and meeting with community councils. There was overwhelming support for the National Park statutory purposes, especially the first. A number of responses indicated that the Authority should be more directly involved in supporting the local economy. The continuing management and promotion of the Coast Path and the Authority’s work through Oriel y Parc were seen as being particularly important and should not be affected by any significant budget reductions.

Comments on this or for future versions of the Improvement Plan may be emailed to [info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk](mailto: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 612km<sup>2</sup>, 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 and the Future Generations Bill.

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 totalling £4,215,272 for 2015/16 but with no additional capital grant this results in a reduction in overall funding of

4.8% compared to 2014/15. Further reductions in this and other grants means the Authority is anticipating funding reductions in excess of 4% during each of the next two years.

This Improvement Plan sets out both the improvement objectives as required under the Local Government Measure and also our four corporate outcomes and is intended to:

- State our aspirations for the Park and how these may benefit people
- Guide our work and explain our priorities
- Inform our staff and key partner organisations
- Inspire and engage others to contribute to our desired outcomes
- Form the basis of our future business planning

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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.**



## Future Generations

The work of the National Park Authority contributes to the draft well-being goals set out in the Welsh Government’s Future Generations Bill which is scheduled to become law in 2015/16.

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Description of the goal</b>	<b>Authority Contribution</b>
A prosperous Wales.	An innovative and productive, low carbon emission, economy that makes more efficient and proportionate use of resources; and which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities for a skilled and well-educated population.	The authority has adopted a local development plan and issued supplementary planning guidance based on sustainable development principles.
A resilient Wales.	A biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change.	The authority manages its own property and encourages other land owners to manage their land to conserve and enhance the natural environment.
A healthier Wales.	A society in which people’s physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.	The authority manages the Coast Path and other rights of way, to provide and promote opportunities for recreation and well-being through access to the wider coast and countryside.
A more equal Wales.	A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.	Through its social inclusion policies the Authority encourages and enables people of all backgrounds to be involved with the National Park
A Wales of cohesive communities	Attractive, viable, safe and well connected communities	These attributes are considered important in the Local Development Plan.

<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.</p>	<p>A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.</p>	<p>Conserving and promoting culture, heritage and recreation are central to the Authority's statutory purposes</p>
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## **Improvement Outcome 1 - The landscape, environment and culture of the National Park are conserved for current and future generations.**

### Introduction

We will use our resources, expertise and statutory powers to support and encourage those responsible for land and buildings to minimise the impact of climate change and implement sustainable development. We will promote the wide variety of local, linguistic, artistic and social cultures found within the National Park through our conservation, education and interpretation activities.

### What are we trying to achieve? -

A special landscape

- Which is admired by everyone for its beauty
- Where the native species flourish
- Where local business benefits from the special qualities
- Where historic features are maintained
- Where the linguistic, artistic and social cultures are celebrated

### Improvement Objective for Outcome 1

To investigate and implement conservation initiatives within a reducing budget through additional partnership working and external grant funding.

### Where are we now

- Public consultations with residents and visitors indicate that the conservation of the natural beauty of the area is considered to be very important.
- Conservation management on over 100 sites with over 70% already meeting their management plan objectives
- Advice and information is provided for the maintenance and conservation of historic buildings and archaeological sites
- Over 30,000 people viewing the Gallery at Oriel y Parc visitor centre
- A recent independent review of listed buildings at risk has resulted in an increase from 4% to 7% although relatively simple actions should remove many of these from the at risk list.

### We will be succeeding in delivering this outcome when:

- a. The biodiversity on land managed by and in partnership with the NPA is improving over time
- b. There is no increase in the number of Listed Buildings at risk;
- c. There is an increase in the number of people involved with cultural aspects of the National Park through archaeology, history, art and language related events.
- d. There is an increase in the number of people engaging with the Authority in Welsh

### We will take the following actions to deliver these Outcomes:

- a. Manage our own sites for conservation benefit;
- b. Work with Gwaun Valley and other communities to combat invasive species;

- c. Work with partner organisations to access grant funding for conservation;
- d. Encourage landowners and farmers to engage in agri-environment schemes, both national and local;
- e. Commence a review of the Local Development Plan;
- f. Encourage greater take-up of pre-application advice
- g. Promote and support the artistic, linguistic and social cultures;
- h. Encourage owners of historic and archaeological sites to protect them
- i. Investigate the possibility of a Dark Skies designation;

How do we compare?

Although the majority of our managed sites are meeting the management plan objectives, in other areas of the National Park many species may be in decline due to factors including climate change and changes in land management. However, this is probably much less in Pembrokeshire than many other parts of the UK as shown in local and national comparisons such as the State of Wildlife in Pembrokeshire and the National Farmland Birds Survey.

The percentage of listed buildings and archaeological sites at risk is similar to the average in the UK national parks.

Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Actual 2014/15 (todate)	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%	70%	75%	No sites are considered as failing and the others are in the early stage of a management regime.
Number of approved developments contrary to landscape protection policies (LDP Policies 8 or 15)	0	No more than 2	0	No more than 2	Authority is determining applications in accordance with policy
Area of land actively managed for conservation.	1636ha	1700ha			No targets set as additions and disposals to management arrangements may be dependent on funding and appropriate opportunities.
NPA managed land			508ha		
Land managed in partnership with NPA			1152ha		
% of listed buildings at risk	4%(48 bldgs)	4%	7%	6%	County wide review undertaken by CaDW during 2014 identified some additional at risk. Average in English NPAs – 3%. BBNPA 6.6%, SNPA 16%
Number of people engaged through cultural events	Over 43,000	30,000	28,000 to Feb	30,000	

## **Improvement Outcome 2 - Residents and visitors from a wide range of backgrounds enjoy, appreciate and understand the National Park.**

### Introduction

We will promote access and provide opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy recreation and the natural, cultural and historic environment of the Park, and we will use the special qualities of the National Park as the basis for lifelong learning for all.

### What are we trying to achieve?

Safe and accessible opportunities for public enjoyment and understanding of the National Park's special qualities by;

- Providing easy access to appropriate recreational activities free from barriers for all potential users
- Providing information and interpretation which is easily available and accessible
- The resources and special qualities of the National Park are inspirational for life-long learning
- Engaging with under-represented groups to develop their understanding and appreciation of the National Park

### Improvement Objective for Outcome 2

To maintain the Coast Path National Trail and at least 80% of the network of rights of way open, usable, suitably signposted, and in an acceptable condition despite the Authority's reduction in funding.

### Where are we now

- over 1127km of footpaths and bridleways
- over 80% of the paths were maintained to the Authority's quality standard
- 180 km suitable for the less able with 50km suitable for wheelchair users
- 200 downloadable maps of walks available on-line
- Over 250,000 people use our visitor centres
- Over 280,000 website hits
- 225,000 copies of the Authority's award winning visitor publication, Coast to Coast, distributed
- 8,000 school children visit Carew Castle and Castell Henllys on educational visits
- Over 650 events attracting 9,600 participants
- Over 200 volunteer events involving 1,800 volunteer days.
- The MOSAIC project has introduced over 600 people to the area and 22 'Champions' now trained
- Over 5,000 'hard to reach' individuals involved through Your Park, Walkability and Ranger led groups

### We will be succeeding in delivering this outcome when:

- a. Over 80% of the rights of way meet the Authority's standards,
- b. The number of people using the path network is increasing,

- c. We engage directly with over 250,000 individuals, including at least 5,000 ‘hard to reach’ participants through the Discovery and Ranger programmes, and via the Authority’s visitor centres and attractions.
- d. The number of volunteers participating in the work of the National Park Authority is maintained.

We will take the following Actions to deliver these Outcomes:

- a. Maintain the Coast Path, inland rights of way, and other paths;
- b. Renegotiate the Rights of Way delegation agreement with Pembrokeshire County Council;
- c. Develop interpretation, education, websites, and other media, and work directly with schools and other groups to promote the relevance of the National Park in addressing environmental and socio-economic concerns;
- d. Engage with ‘hard to reach’ groups, at our centres and through a wide range of organised events including Mosaic Wales, and ‘Your Park’ activities;

How do we compare?

Over 80% of paths in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park are open and usable, similar to the Brecon Beacons National Park. The average in England’s National Parks is 83% with the average across Wales estimated at about 55%.

Our extensive programmes of education activities and events exceed those of most of the other National Parks, although we wish to increase the opportunities for volunteers to be more actively involved in the Authority’s work.

Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Actual 2014/15 (todate)	Target 2015/16	Comparison/Comment
% of RoW open & accessible meeting the quality standard	78%	80%	81%	80%	Wales average is 55%, top quartile is 75%
Number of people using footpaths (from fixed counters)	141,831	Increase	101,393 (6 months)	Increase	Data collected by fixed location counters where comparable – 9% incr.
Number of volunteer events	219	200	180	200	
Number of volunteer days	1,874	increase	1357	increase	Data up to Dec 2014. English NPAs average 4,100
Total number of people using our Centres, Activities & Events, schools programmes	275,600	250,000	263,702	250,000	Data available as at February 2015
Number of ‘hard to reach’ people engaging with the National Park	5,070	5,000	2,805 (to Jan).	5,000	Includes Your Park, Mosaic, Rangers, & Health projects

### **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.**

#### Introduction

We will encourage local businesses, in particular tourism and agriculture, to ensure a sustainable use of the resources of the Park in the development of their businesses. We will encourage the adoption of healthier and more sustainable lifestyles by providing easy access to recreation, and by promoting sustainable transport, renewable energy sources and the well-being of communities. We will use our planning responsibilities to assist in the provision of affordable homes.

#### What are we trying to achieve?

The National Park Authority's work is recognised as improving the economic and social well-being by

- Encouraging and supporting local sustainable business
- Promoting affordable and quality housing
- Engaging with local communities and encouraging volunteering
- Providing opportunities and activities which have a positive impact on health
- Promoting a clean and safe environment, and
- Promoting sustainable development

#### 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

- SDF supported 3 local business and 4 community projects
- The Authority is a partner in Destination Pembrokeshire
- The tourism industry is supported by the Authority's work in visitor centres, rights of way, Coast to Coast and protection of the landscape through planning policies
- Funding for the Greenways Bus services has been maintained, subject to other partners maintaining their contribution.
- 30 affordable housing units have been approved so far in 2014/15 (out of 50 units approved in total) and £52,338 was collected through commuted sums and section 106 agreements with further contributions due on completion of the properties.
- Over 90% of all planning applications were approved

#### We will be succeeding in delivering this outcome when:

- a. There is an increasing number of affordable homes approved
- b. The number of people using coastal buses, park and ride and similar schemes increases each year

- c. We complete the scrutiny of socio-economic project and take forward the recommendations.

We will take the following Actions to deliver these Outcomes:

- a. Commence preparations for a review of the LDP;
- b. Work with the Destination Pembrokeshire Partnership and others to encourage and support sustainable tourism businesses and promote Pembrokeshire as a resort
- c. Continue the ‘Walkability’ activities and provide other opportunities for improvement to mental and physical health.
- d. Continue financial support for Greenways bus services
- e. Use SDF funding to support local businesses and communities
- f. Deliver at least 15 small scale community projects through the Ranger service.

How do we compare?

It is not possible to provide comparison information on this topic as data on socio-economic well-being is not generally collected for the National Park area.

Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2013/14	Target 2014/15	Actual 2014/15 (todate)	Target 2015/16	Comparison/Comment
% of new housing units which are affordable	19%	20%	60%	Subject to review of LDP.	Thirty affordable units approved. BBNPA – 20%, SNPA 63%
Number of people using coastal buses etc	86,000	83,000	64,532	Increase subject to service levels	Service reduced in 2014 as funding cuts meant a reduction in the number of services run.
Number of people involved in health related events arranged by NPA	2,252	1,200	2,155	2,000	Walkability project and Ranger led events



**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.**

Introduction

The Authority is facing significantly reduced funding over the next two years and probably for several years in the future. We must make strategic decisions to reduce the cost base of the Authority with the minimum practical reduction to services.

What are we trying to achieve?

To ensure that the Authority delivers the services required by residents, visitors and partners within the funding available.

The Authority will continue to

- Be open, fair and transparent in its decision making
- Provide value for money and quality services
- Work well with partner organisations
- Listen to and respect the views of local communities
- Contribute to reducing the impacts of climate change
- Be well managed and maintain a high level of governance, and
- Be recognised as a good employer

Improvement Objective for Outcome 4

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

Where are we now

- The Authority anticipates that its net budget will be reduced by over 4% during the each of the next two years
- A wide consultation to determine our priorities for the next few years indicated strong support for the first purpose, the Coast Path and Oriel y Parc

We will be succeeding in delivering this outcome when:

- a. The Authority sets and operates within its balanced budget
- b. We receive a favourable Corporate Review and Annual Improvement Report each year from Wales Audit Office;

We will take the following Actions to deliver this Outcome:

- a. Review the cost base and income potential for each service area
- b. Work with WLGA and other Welsh National Park Authorities to be an early adopter of the Future Generations legislation;
- c. Investigate alternative delivery mechanisms including joint working, out-sourcing and restructuring staff resources

## **Miscellaneous and statutory Measures & Indicators**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Actual 2013/14</b>	<b>Target 2014/15</b>	<b>Actual 2014/15 (todate)</b>	<b>Target 2015/16</b>	<b>Comparison/Comment</b>
CO <sup>2</sup> emissions generated by our energy and travel	353,523	343,000	262,000 (to Dec)	343,000	Slightly above same period last year
Member attendance at main committees	83%	75%	87%	75%	Brecon 84% SNPA 76%
Member attendance at training events	74%	75%	73%	75%	BBNPA 70% SNPA 73%

### **Statutory Indicators**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Actual 2013/14</b>	<b>Target 2014/15</b>	<b>Actual 2014/15 (todate)</b>	<b>Target 2015/16</b>	<b>Comparison/Comment</b>
The number of working days/ shifts per full time equivalent local authority employee lost due to sickness absence.	8	6	7 (est)	6	SNPA 9.5 BBNPA 8.8 English NPAs average 5 Public sector average 8.1 Private sector 5.9
Number of planning applications registered	434		556 (to Jan)		391 in same period last year
The % of planning applications determined during the year that were approved.	87%		95%		SNPA 89% BBNPA 92%
The % of planning applications determined within 8 weeks	76%	70%	86%	75%	BBNPA 76%
% planning appeals supporting the NPA decision	47%		85%		9 out of 19, BBNPA 47% SNPA 76%
% of enforcement cases closed within 12 weeks	70%	85%	78%	80%	SNPA – 58% BBNPA - 29%
No. of enforcement cases outstanding over 12 weeks	84	80	55	70	
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	3 fte 66%	3 fte 66%	3 fte 66%	3 fte 66%	Welsh Language Scheme indicator
The percentage of staff who have received Welsh language training to a specific qualification level	27%	27%	27%	27%	6 to ‘A’ level 34 to GCSE (Welsh Language Scheme indicator)
The number of complaints received in relation to the operation of the Welsh Language Scheme	0	0	0	0	Welsh Language Scheme indicator

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