

# OPERATIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

29 June 2016

Present: Councillors P Harries, ST Hudson, R Kilmister and P J Morgan, Mr A E Sangster and Councillor A Wilcox.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10:00am – 12.10pm)

**1. Appointment of Chair**

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor R Kilmister be appointed Chair for the forthcoming year.

**2. Appointment of Deputy Chair**

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor AE Sangster be appointed Deputy Chair for the forthcoming year.

**3. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor ML Evans, Ms C Gwyther and Mrs M Thomas.

**4. Disclosures of interest**

There were no disclosures of interest

**5. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20 April 2016 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2016 be confirmed and signed.

**6. Presentation by Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum**

The Chair welcomed Ceri Crichton from the Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum (PCF) who gave a presentation on their work. She explained that PCF had been established in 2000 and had sustainable development of the coast at its core, originating, managing and delivering marine related projects for the community, public, private and third sectors in Pembrokeshire. National Park Authority funding supported two main projects – the Outdoor Charter and Marine Code, as well as delivery of training events and ongoing conflict and access management issues at various locations across the County. This latter currently included stakeholder engagement work at St Justinian's on how best to manage the facilities and area going forward. Other projects that were mentioned were a three year research programme into the provision of adventurous outdoor recreation opportunities for disabled people in Pembrokeshire, the Caldey Buoyage programme and the Marine Code App for mobile devices.



Members asked about a number of these projects, particularly the outcomes expected from the adventurous outdoor recreation for disabled people. They were provided with copies of some of PCF's publications and Members also asked about the Forum's Welsh Language provision in this regard, and whether greater use of the language would provide a greater sense of place. The Chief Executive added that discussions would be held with PCF in the near future as the Authority's Welsh Language Standards applied to those activities that it funded also.

**NOTED.**

**7. SDF Project 0343: Pwyth Mewn Pryd/Stitch in Time - Update**

The Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) Project Coordinator explained that the project was to develop a catchment-based approach to invasive non-native plant control in the Gwaun Valley. The three target invasive species were Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and Rhododendron. All three species were identified by the Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership as priority species for control.

The Gwaun Valley catchment was chosen for the project as it contained several Sites of Special Scientific Interest and was important for several species. INNS often spread along (down) watercourses; catchments, and sections of catchments were therefore an appropriate scale at which to work, with treatment taking place from the top of a drainage unit down and from the outside in.

The treatment season was generally focussed on May to September for the three named species. Survey had benefitted enormously from dedicated volunteers and from sightings and grid references submitted by members of the public. The target species had been recorded at around 120 sites in the Gwaun Valley catchment so far, covering approximately 27 hectares. Approximately 55% of this area was being treated.

As well as being involved in survey work, volunteers had also helped with management and control. Work parties had uprooted Himalayan balsam plants before the seed pods matured and had cleared vegetation near to Japanese knotweed plants to make them accessible for professional spray treatment. Four volunteers had also been funded to undertake spraying training in 2015. Collaboration had taken place with many voluntary groups including Cymdeithas Llandudoch, Friends of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, Pembrokeshire Rivers Trust, Nevern Angling Association as well as the Authority's Junior Rangers, and without their support the project would not have been possible.

The greatest ongoing task was with the clearance of Rhododendron in the Trecwn valley, where almost-all of this species was to be found. Much work had been undertaken here in winter 2016 when the site manager,



NPA staff and contractors had cut and processed dense cover on the steep slopes. This had been facilitated by NRW funding, and its effectiveness would be assessed next year.

In terms of evaluation of the project to date, effective eradication of Himalayan balsam from the catchment by 2019 was a possibility. A leaflet had been produced focusing on why the species was a problem and how its removal could be tackled. Education about INNS, especially among landowners, was an important strand in their eradication going forward. With regard to Japanese knotweed, stem injection and foliar spray had been used to treat many of the plants in the Gwaun. It was anticipated that there would be capacity among National Park staff and volunteers to manage and work towards its eradication in the longer term.

The Coordinator concluded by saying that effective eradication of the target species was the goal of the project. If and when an area was deemed to be clear, monitoring for regrowth or reinfection would be needed. Volunteer effort was key to this, and developing monitoring capacity locally would be a valuable legacy of the project. While the Gwaun Valley workload was expected to decrease in successive years, this could allow new catchments to be taken on. Accordingly the Authority had submitted an application for a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Heritage Grant development phase project in June 2016. If this was successful, a second round application would follow in 2017 for delivery from 2018-2023.

Members were pleased with the success of the project to date and hoped that the HLF bid was successful as there was a risk that if the project ceased the work that had been done would be lost. There was also great praise for the role of volunteers and one Member asked if their role could be publicised through a press release.

#### **NOTED.**

#### **8. Use of Affordable Housing S106 Contributions in Pembrokeshire**

The Head of Park Direction reported that Pembrokeshire County Council's framework for the use of affordable housing for S106 contributions had recently been reported to and approved by its Cabinet and a copy of the report was appended for Members' information.

Members asked why in some cases the contribution received, set out in an appendix to the report, was greater than that requested and also sought clarification over the meaning of the third paragraph of the report where there appeared to be a double negative regarding the spending of money. As the report had been prepared by officers at Pembrokeshire County Council, the officer agreed to seek answers to these questions and forward any response to Members of the Committee.



**NOTED.**

## **9. Risk Register**

The Finance Manager presented the latest risk register which had recently been reviewed by both the Authority's Management and Leadership Teams when recent progress and changes had been noted. No new risks had been added and none removed.

No risks had altered sufficiently to warrant a change in risk level, but following discussion during the most recent Audit & Corporate Services Review Committee, the target for risk 20 (IT failure) had been reduced to amber (medium). However, since the last report three risks had reduced slightly, indicated by the down arrow, but not sufficiently to change the coloured risk level.

There was some discussion regarding the recent referendum result that would see the UK leave the European Union and Members asked that additional risks be added to the register regarding the implications for Cilirhedyn of Coed Cymru/Tir Coed failing to obtain European funding with regard to their proposals for the site, as well as the wider impacts of Brexit which were as yet unknown, but included uncertainty regarding the status of nature conservation designations which currently covered much of the Park.

It was **RESOLVED** that risks be added to the Risk Register regarding the future of Cilirhedyn and the wider impacts of Brexit.

## **10. Performance report for the period ending May 2016**

The Finance Manager reported that before his retirement, the Business and Performance Manager had modified the performance report to follow the structure of the Corporate Plan for 2016/17 which had been agreed by the Authority on 15 June. This followed the approach of the Well-being of Future Generations Act with seven well-being objectives, with an additional section providing general governance information. The report showed the percentage of work completed, together with the associated RAG (Red-Amber-Green) status for each action. Progress on each action was set out in the report.

It was noted that unfortunately, after only a few weeks of the new financial year, limited data was available and therefore a number of items in the report were blank, although in most cases work had already commenced and progress was as should be expected at this time of year.

There was some discussion regarding how well some of the measures fitted into the objectives, for example whether those listed under Objective 1 were in fact measures of prosperity or whether data on the



Pembrokeshire economy in general could be included, and also whether difficulties experienced by certain projects that were outside the control of the Authority should be reflected in Authority's RAG rating.

It was noted that the next report to the Committee would be prepared by the new Performance and Compliance Co-ordinator who would start with the Authority on 1 August. Members hoped that in time there could be changes to the format of the report to reflect their concerns.

It was **RESOLVED** that the performance report be received.

## **11. Media Monitoring**

The Chair welcomed the Communications Officer who gave a presentation on the Authority's media monitoring. He explained that 'media monitoring' was a term used to describe how the Authority monitored and analysed online (digital), print (mainly newspapers and magazines), radio and TV coverage of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and the Authority. Social media monitoring (mainly Facebook and Twitter) was a sub-area of digital coverage that was monitored. This was undertaken through the use of a service provided by a company called Gorkana which searched the media for key words provided by officers; the cost of this was c£5,700 pa. In addition staff monitored the local newspapers on a daily basis. Reports could subsequently be provided to officers of media coverage on a particular issue. Clippings could also be shared with staff as the Authority purchased licences from the Newspaper Licensing Authority and the Copyright Licensing Authority allowing them to do so.

The tone – positive, negative or neutral – of that coverage was also recorded, and in the past year it was reported that there had been a low number of negative media items, with an average of 1.3 articles per month, however in the past 12 months there had been four months with no negative coverage of the Authority.

Much use was made by officers of social media, which was effectively a free form of promotion. It was monitored in-house throughout the day, including over the weekend, as a great deal of damage could be done in a short time if negative posts were made to which the Authority did not respond. The number of 'likes' and 're-tweets' were also analysed.

Members thanked the officer for an interesting presentation and congratulated the team for being professional, hardworking and very effective.

**NOTED.**



## **12. Forward Work Programme**

Following discussions at the previous meeting of the Committee, the Chief Executive had circulated a list of items which could be considered over the coming months. This suggested that at the following meeting there would be reports on Partnership work in relation to recreation management, with a focus on work in Castlemartin; feedback from the survey of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Trail and a review of the work undertaken by the Authority in schools.

It was **AGREED** that the above mentioned items be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

## **13. Continuous Improvement Group: delegation of issues**

It was **RESOLVED** that there were no issues that needed to be delegated to the Continuous Improvement Group for consideration.

