

REPORT OF BUSINESS & PERFORMANCE MANAGER

SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2015/16 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 2015./16

Recommendation:

Members are requested to approve the Improvement Plan Part 2 for 2015/16

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



**Pembrokeshire
Coast National
Park Authority**

**Improvement
Plan Part 2
2015/16**

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.

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 4.2% at £4,192,000 with a small additional grant of £115,000 made available late in the

year. During the year this reduction in National Park Grant was partly compensated by increased income from merchandise sales at the centres and a better than anticipated income from car park charges.

In preparation for the implementation of the Well-being of Future Generation Act in April 2016, the Authority took part as an Early Adopter in workshops organised by WLGA and PwC. The Improvement Plan Part 1 for 2016/17 is being prepared in line with the Welsh Well-being Goals set out in the Act and the Authority is also involved with the developing local Public Service Board.

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

Where are we now

We are involved in managing 101 different sites, of which only 18 are owned by the Authority, in total covering 1,234 hectares and we completed monitoring in 92. 60% of the sites are considered to be 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.

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 136,000 people visited the centre during the year, a reduction of 5% on the previous year with over 26,200 people viewing the Gallery, and over 600 people attended historic culture events.

Gwaun Valley Invasive Species Project

With funding from the Sustainable Development Fund, a project leader has been appointed to co-ordinate to remove invasive species, particularly Japanese Knotweed and Himalyan Balsam from parts of the Gwaun valley. By tackling this on a river catchment scale and developing the necessary skills and interest with the local communities and landowners this approach is intended to remove the species at source and provide the necessary repeated treatment to prevent re-infestation. Already other community areas are asking for assistance in developing their own schemes.

Dark Skies Designation

Following a survey of potential dark sky sites within the National Park, a bid to designate nine sites was submitted. Five these have been approved with the remainder subject to possible resubmission after some modifications to the sites. A joint bid with Brecon Beacons is to be developed to develop the Dark Skies Designation as a tourism theme with further interpretation and promotion.

Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2014/15	Target 2015/16	Actual 2015/16	Target 2016/17	Comparison/Comment
% of NPA managed sites which are in good and/or improving ecological condition & being managed in line with the management plan	75%	70%	>70%	>70%	Only 1 site (out of 101) failed to meet the management plan. All sites monitored but not all records updated.
Area of land actively managed for conservation.					No targets set but we will try to maintain the area as additions and disposals to management arrangements may be dependent on funding and appropriate opportunities.
NPA managed land	508ha		435ha		
Land managed in partnership with NPA	1152ha		1234ha		
Number of approved developments contrary to landscape protection policies	0	No more than 2		No more than 2	Full year data not available as part of LDP Monitoring report in October.
% of listed buildings at risk	7%	6%	6%	<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	30,400	30,000	27,216	30,000	Includes Oriel y Parc Gallery, and archaeology events only.

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.

Among new paths opened during the year are Slebbech (3.4km) and Mynachlog-ddu (0.9km) and work is underway on new paths in Solva and St.Dogmaels.

In June a year-round user survey was started on the coast path with a target of over 5,000 responses. Early indications show very high levels of user satisfaction, the final report is expected in the autumn.

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 271,500 people, down slightly from last year, and the Authority's website attracted more than 400,000 individual visits, an increase 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. Over 7,200 children visit Carew and Castell Henllys as part of the Authority's education service.

The National Park Rangers engage with over 2,670 school children and many volunteers providing over 1,500 opportunities for people with disabilities and from other disadvantaged groups to become involved.

Walkability Project

In the last 12 months the Walkability scheme part funded by 'Lets Walk Cymru' has run 204 walking sessions involving over 2,300 participants. Extensive use has been made of the Community Transport buses whose wheelchair access have made it possible for many wheelchair and mobility scooter users to take part.

As well as the regular use of mobility scooters by specific Walkability groups, reports from Carew Castle, Newport Information Centre and Oriol Y Parc indicate a significant increase in demand for the three mobility scooters available for loan. Increasingly the services of Walkability have been sought by groups with specific additional medical, mobility or learning needs, whether it be dementia, physical disability, pulmonary conditions or mental health support.

The project has worked with a wide range of groups including:

Age Concern, The Alheimers Society, The Army Family Welfare Team, Bikemobility, Clynfw Farm, The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Elliots Hill Care, Exercise Referral Team, Communities First, Pembrokeshire People First, and Shalom House.

The participants in the activities have been almost exclusively residents of Pembrokeshire, coming from as far afield as St Dogmaels and Saundersfoot, along with many from the centres of population. As one of the aims of the project is to allow residents to explore the variety of landscapes that Pembrokeshire offers, the venues for walks have covered many sections of the coastline, the Cleddau estuary, the Preseli hills and the patchwork interior farmland, from Amroth to Boncath and Whitesands to Llawhaden. Walk Leader training courses have been put on for volunteers and staff from linked organisations.

The project was selected for use by The Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs as a case study in how the rural environment can be used to enhance health and well-being and submitted to the European Commission, to form part of a conference in Brussels in January 2016.

Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2014/15	Target 2015/16	Actual 2015/16	Target 2016/17	Comparison/Comment
% of RoW open & accessible meeting the quality standard	85%	80%	>85%	80%	Wales estimate is 55%, English NPA average 73%
Number of people using footpaths (from fixed counters)	167,266	Increase	184,305	Increase	Data collected by fixed location counters where comparable.
Number of volunteer events	268	200+	208	200+	2014/5 had been more

Measure	Actual 2014/15	Target 2015/16	Actual 2015/16	Target 2016/17	Comparison/Comment
					heavily promoted.
Number of volunteer days	1,970	Increase	1516	Increase	# volunteer days lower than planned as fewer events.
Total number of people using our Centres, Activities & Events, schools programmes	274,000	250,000	271,529	250,000	
Number of 'hard to reach' people engaging with the National Park	6,081	5,000	3,808	5,000	Includes Your Park 1400 (funding reduced), Social Inclusion 1393, Rangers SI – 1015,

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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.

Examples of planning contributing to economic development

In recent years the planning service has approved a number of major developments, both new build and conversions including a restaurant on the coastline, a 68 bed hotel associated with 39 apartments and 3 commercial units, conversions of two disused school buildings, one to a 10 bed hotel and one to a micro-brewery, and the conversion of a disused transport depot to a new retail and office complex. Since April 2014, 13 applications for new or conversions to holiday lets and a further 6 tourism related applications have been approved. Overall the service approves over 90% of all planning applications.

Following a scrutiny of the National Park Authorities' contributions to the local economies undertaken jointly with Snowdonia, an action plan has been developed to take forward the recommendations during 2016. These include greater recognition of market circumstances in preparing policies and the Local Development Plan, which is undergoing a full review; lobbying Welsh Government on the socio-economic duty; working with both public and private sector groups to improve the recognition and value of the National Park brand; improving awareness of the role of planning; promote the positive impact of the National Park and the work of National Park Authorities on the business community.

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. PCNPA worked closely with Destination Pembrokeshire Partnership to develop a new business model, for the partnership and a vision and strategy for tourism development in the county.

Community Projects

The Ranger service helped to deliver the following small scale community projects

Young people from Fishguard - Garden and wildlife area, Point Youth Centre –
 Broad Haven Community - Slash Ponds and board walk
 Newport Paths Group - Footpath improvements in Newport area
 FERN Group (FWE Community) - Orchard creation and various projects around the
 Local Nature Reserve
 Porthgain – various community groups - Himalayan balsam eradication,
 Prendergast Young Care Leavers - Garden improvement project
 Sandy Haven Chapel volunteers - Churchyard conservation work
 Orchard Mawr Group - Orchard planting and maintenance in the Haverfordwest area
 Various groups including Solva community, Princes Trust, Brawdy army volunteers
 helping the creation of new footpath in Solva
 Friends of the National Park - Re-fence St Non's Chapel
 Various groups including Voluntary Wardens - Create new footpath below Manorbier
 Castle
 Fishguard AFC – Pembrokeshire College - Plant new hedgerow,
 Fishguard residents - Improvements to Marine Walk,
 St Dogmaels Footpath Group - Opened up footpath in Moylegrove
 Voluntary Wardens - Improvements to Allen's View, Tenby
 Voluntary Wardens - Repair bridge damaged by car, St Nicholas
 Sardis Parks and Gardens Group - Installed wooden seat, Sardis

Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2014/15	Target 2015/16	Actual 2015/16	Target 2016/17	Comparison/Comment
% of new housing units which are affordable	60%	20%	%	Subject to review of LDP	Data to be confirmed for 2015/16
Number of people using coastal buses etc.	64,532	Increase	66,775	Increase	may be subject to changes in service levels

¹ Extracted from PCC report to Cabinet

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

While precise budget planning figures had not been provided by Welsh Government before the budget was set for 2015/16, the Authority anticipated a reduction of the National Park Grant with advice that a further reduction of up to 10% may affect 2016/17.

During a series of workshops the Authority Members reviewed service provision and options for potential cost savings. A community asset transfer of an operational building has been agreed in principle but is dependent on EU grant funding. By reviewing staff posts at every opportunity provided by early retirements, voluntary redundancies, part-time working and resignations, the Authority has continued to reduce its staffing with a further reduction of more than two full time equivalents. A shared IT service managed by Brecon Beacons NPA has been in place for 6 months and has reduced costs and shared scarce specialist skills. Staff costs continue at only 53% of the reduced net budget.

Work has already started on the implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The Corporate Plan for 2016/17 has been prepared in line with the well-being goals and can also act as the Improvement Plan Part 1.

Miscellaneous and statutory Measures & Indicators

Measure	Actual 2014/15	Target 2015/16	Actual 2015/16	Target 2016/17	Comparison/Comment
Member attendance at main committees	89%	75%	82%	75%	
Member attendance at training events	72%	75%	72%	75%	

Statutory Indicators

Measure	Actual 2014/15	Target 2015/16	Actual 2015/16	Target 2016/17	Comparison/Comment
The number of working days/ shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) local authority employee lost due to sickness absence.	8.1	6	7.5	6	SNPA 7.2 BBNPA 7.8 English NPAs range from 2.6 – 9.2 PCC 10.2 Public sector average 8.1 Private sector 5.9
Number of planning applications registered	681		560		
The % of planning applications determined during the year that were approved.	95%		94%		SNPA 90% BBNPA 90%
The % of planning applications determined within 8 weeks	85%	75%	75%	75%	BBNPA 77% SNPA 74%
% planning appeals supporting the NPA decision	79%		83%		5 out of 6 BBNPA 44% SNPA 77%
% of enforcement cases closed within 12 weeks	68%	80%	61%	70%	SNPA – 64% BBNPA - 85%
Number of enforcement cases outstanding for more than 12 weeks	55	70	54	70	