

OPERATIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

20 April 2016

Present: Mrs M Thomas.(Deputy Chair in the Chair)
Councillors P Harries and P J Morgan, Mr A E Sangster and
Councillor A Wilcox.

[Ms C Gwyther arrived during consideration of Report 02/16 Penlan
Habitat Recreation Project (Minute 5 refers)]

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 12:30pm – 2.25pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors ST Hudson and
ML Evans.

2. Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 9th December 2015 were
presented for confirmation and signature.

It was noted that under the forward work programme, reports on
performance of the coast path and options for future funding; and an
assessment of the Authority's schools programme would be presented to
a future meeting of the Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th December
2015 be confirmed and signed.

4. 2015 Chough Surveillance Report

It was reported that Wales contained 50% of the UK population of
Choughs, and within that Pembrokeshire contained approximately 1/3 of
the Welsh population. As a result there were three Special Protection
Areas for Choughs in Pembrokeshire. As this was such an important
species, the Chough population in the National Park had been the subject
of annual surveillance since the early 1980's. The monitoring scheme
reported on the numbers and distribution of breeding pairs of Choughs
and productivity (number of chicks fledged) within the National Park. The
Biodiversity Officer explained that in 1994 a Chough strategy had been
produced which established a protocol to standardise methods of
surveillance.

The report, which had been circulated to Members, noted an additional
eight occupied territories in 2015 when compared to 2014 and a higher



number of pairs with eggs and young in the nest. Overall productivity was slightly lower than in 2014 due to late stage failures, possibly due to predation or weather impacts. The number of non-breeding birds was estimated at between 65 and 76 birds, the highest for many years. Across the UK, the Pembrokeshire population was the only one that had increased over the ten year period 2002 to 2012. In conclusion, the population continued to show good signs of recovery since the severe winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11.

The officer went on to explain that the Conserving the Coastal Slopes project and the grazing animal network run by the Authority were both important in providing suitable foraging sites for Chough. Work with climbers to establish a 'closed' season during which cliff top nest sites were not disturbed was also important to the success of the species.

Members expressed their enjoyment in reading the report and were pleased with the work that had been carried out both regarding habitat and with climbers. They asked whether there was any liaison between the different areas of the UK to share best practice, and the officer reported that she had recently attended a Welsh Chough Network day and that a UK group also existed.

NOTED.

5. Penlan Habitat Recreation Project: Extended Phase 1 Survey, Condition Assessment and Recommendations for Future Management

Members were reminded that in 2001 the Authority had undertaken a 5 year experimental project to re-create heathland and native woodland on a 70ha Sitka Spruce woodland overlooking the Gwaun Valley. In 2015, ten years since the completion of the project, the Biodiversity Officer had commissioned an external consultant to conduct a vegetation survey and biodiversity assessment on the newly created habitats, as well as options for the future management of the site.

The report, which had been circulated to Members of the Committee, had concluded that the project successfully met its original habitat creation objectives, and had potential for colonisation by several scarce higher plants present on adjacent Carningli.

The report went on to discuss to main scenarios for future management of the site – non-intervention and livestock grazing management – from a wildlife conservation perspective. It also considered mechanisms for greater community utilisation of the ecosystem 'goods and services' of the area.



The report would be used as part of the evidence for the production of a new management plan for Penlan.

Thanking officers for an interesting report, Members asked about the likely future management of the site, and the Biodiversity Officer explained that it was likely that part of the site would revert to woodland eventually, but that there were nature conservation benefits in the meantime. Part of the site would also be retained as heathland which was part of the original objectives of the project. Members also asked whether the site could be used for educational purposes and officers agreed that the site had the potential for such a use in the future.

NOTED.

6. Risk Register

The Business and Performance 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 since the Register had last been considered by the Committee, however one risk – the impact of Welsh Language Standards had been reduced from medium (amber) to low (green). The officer highlighted three risks which had increased slightly, indicated by an 'up arrow' and two which had reduced slightly, indicated by a 'down arrow' but noted that these changes had not been sufficient to modify the coloured risk level.

A question was asked regarding the preparation of contingency and business continuity plans under risks 17 and 19, and officers confirmed that this referred to the need to update existing plans. Also one Member was surprised that the trend this quarter for the risk of failure to meet affordable housing targets was static, however officers advised that although the number of units built had increased, it was still below target.

NOTED.

7. Performance report for the period ending 31 March 2016

The Business and Performance Manager presented the performance to date for the Park Direction, Delivery and Discovery Teams against the strategic outcomes in the Improvement Plan Part 1 for the year ending 31 March 2016 using the Ffynnon performance management system. This 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, and most of the data represented the year end situation.



Most activities were completed or well underway. The stormy weather earlier in the winter had curtailed some of the winter work programme, and staff were redirected to deal with several fallen trees on and near footpaths. Much of the lost time had been recovered with the recent spell of dry weather. Staff sickness had reduced the historical events programme. The number of visitors and revenue at both Tenby Visitor Centre and Oriel y Parc was less than last year, although Carew, Castell Henllys and Newport had increases. Overall visitor numbers were down by about 2% and merchandise by about 7%, but the schools programmes had increased by 10%.

Finally most of the measures relating to the Development Management service were above target. Members questioned whether the targets should be increased, but officers cautioned against this due to the implications of recent changes in the pre-application service and the risks if targets were not met

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

8. Review and evaluation of the Your Park project (Big Lottery funded from June 2012 to March 2016)

The Discovery Team Leader explained that the aim of this project had been to complement and develop the Authority's existing social inclusion work, targeting local groups and organisations working with people who were among the most likely to face barriers in accessing a wide range of outdoor opportunities, but in particular within the National Park.

Your Park sought to engage local groups and organisations in utilising the outdoors as a place to achieve good outcomes for their clients, and to build organisational capacity to sustain this activity independently, or within minimal support, in the long term.

A copy of the final evaluation report had been circulated to the Committee. This was based on the responses of beneficiaries of the Your Park project and covered a range of perspectives, from those of service users, volunteers, officers and managers of organisations across Pembrokeshire working with disadvantaged communities.

The report sought to measure how well the project had succeeded in getting social inclusion groups and organisations to increase their use of the outdoor and concluded that success had been achieved in providing targeted experience of the National Park, bespoke training opportunities and ongoing support to individual, groups and organisations. It also identified barriers for groups, organisations and individuals in getting the best out of the outdoors and future actions aimed at sustaining and developing the work of the Your Park project.



The Chair welcomed Sally Elliot and Jo Swift from Elliot's Hill Care Ltd who explained that they felt their company had a perfect fit with the Authority's objectives, and thanked officers for their help in delivering the programme. Ms Elliot outlined some of the activities undertaken by staff and participants and explained that as a result of the programme the use of the outdoors had been added to staff job descriptions, and outcome goals had been built into care plans.

Members asked about the level of joint working with other groups in the county, such as the Urdd. Officers replied that there was reasonable joint working and that there were many networks in existence. They went on to explain that a new project was being developed through a Lottery bid and this would focus on partnership and volunteering. Members wondered what the fallback position was in terms of supporting contacts made through the Your Park project if no funding became available. Officers replied that there would be a minimal level of support on offer through occasional training days, etc. The Chief Executive added that in the medium to long term the level of priority afforded to projects such as this would be a decision that Members would have to make.

NOTED.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Chief Executive suggested that the following subjects could form the forward work programme for the Committee over the coming months: Coastal Path; Schools Programme; Endangered Species presentation; Enhancement of Biodiversity; Media Monitoring – an evaluation of press coverage; Management of Recreation with Partners eg MoD; Walkability; Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum; Skills in Action Traineeship programme; Youth Ranger activities.

Members asked for a presentation on work regarding the connectivity of sites and the importance of wildlife corridors, which the Chief Executive agreed could form part of report on the work of the Warden Service

It was **RESOLVED** that some reports from those on the above list, including reports on the Coast Path and Schools Programme would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

10. 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.

