

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

18 November 2015

Present: Councillor M James (Chair)

Mr A Archer, Mr D Ellis, Councillor ML Evans, Councillor P Harries, Councillor S Hudson, Mrs G Hayward, Councillor L Jenkins, Councillor R Kilmister, Councillor RM Lewis, Councillor PJ Morgan, Councillor R Owens, Councillor D Rees, Mr AE Sangster, Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor M Williams.

[Ms C Gwyther arrived prior to consideration of item 4(d)]

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10.00am – 12.40pm)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Mrs M Thomas.

2. Disclosures of Interest

Councillor P Morgan disclosed a personal interest in report 47/15 Car Park Operations but remained in the meeting and played a full part in it; Councillor RM Lewis disclosed a prejudicial interest in the same report and withdrew from the meeting while it was discussed.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 23 September 2015 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2015 be confirmed and signed.

4. Matters arising

(a) Carew Mill – new roof (Minute 5(a))

The Chief Executive advised Members that work to replace the roof had started. The contractor's price was fixed, with a contingency built in. With regard to the sale of the old slates being removed, it had transpired that these belonged to the Carew Estate which had insisted that they retain ownership of those that were not damaged and thus it would not be possible to sell them to offset the cost of new slates.

NOTED.

(b) Final report and findings of the National Parks Joint Scrutiny Group on the Economy (Minute 5(b))

The Chief Executive apologised that the Action Plan was not on the agenda that day, and confirmed that it would come before the next meeting. However the report had recently been discussed at Snowdonia NPA, and copies had been distributed to those in Pembrokeshire who had engaged with the process; the Chairman would also be taking a copy to his meeting with Edwina Hart on 25 November.



NOTED.

(c) Future Finances: National Parks Partnership

The Chief Executive reminded Members that discussions had been ongoing regarding the best approach for the new company and it had been decided that a limited liability company would be the best way forward. This would be set up in the near future, with a shadow board already in existence and the recruitment process for a CEO for the company had begun. He added that he did not believe that the structure of the company would increase the Authority's risk in any way.

NOTED.

(d) Legal challenge to planning decision

It was reported that the appellants had decided not to take this challenge any further. Discussions were ongoing regarding costs, etc.

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 Committees held on 12 August, 24 August and 30 September 2015
- (ii) Operational Review Committee held on 9 September 2015
- (iii) Standards Committee held on 21 October 2015

6. Future Use of the National Park Site at Cilrhedyn, Llanychaer

The Chairman welcomed Roger Thomas, Chairman and Geraint Davies Acting Director of Coed Cymru; and Ffion Farnell Director of Tir Coed.

Members were reminded that the workshop presence at Cilrhedyn had been scaled back in recent years because of staff retirements and subsequent savings. Officers reported that at present the proposal beyond the 2015-16 financial year was to maintain the site, primarily, as a Warden and Ranger base only, with the surplus accommodation being made available to interested parties within an arm's length Landlord and Tenant contractual relationship.

Coed Cymru had been directly involved with the development and operation of Cilrhedyn over many years and in July of this year Coed Cymru and Tir Coed (a charity working to improve the quality of life in rural Wales by working in woodland management) presented an alternative vision for the future of the Cilrhedyn site to the Operational Review Committee. A business plan had now been received by the Authority and this had been circulated to Members for their consideration; representatives of the organisations were present at the meeting that day to outline their proposals and to answer any questions.



Thanking officers and Members for the opportunity to attend the meeting, Mr Thomas began by explaining that while Coed Cymru focused on the sustainable management of Welsh woodlands for economic purposes, Tir Coed aimed to integrate community and woodland and to work with disadvantaged people living in rurally isolated areas. The proposal before the Authority exploited the synergy between the two organisations by proposing using Cilrhedyn to produce path furniture, for training purposes and as a centre for woodland and wood product innovation. The project would fit the objectives set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill and Rural Development Plan, and Mr Thomas acknowledged that a successful bid to the latter would be necessary for the project to succeed, however the intention was to make the Centre financially viable in a short time. The Boards of the two organisations believed that there was a need for three or four similar centres in Wales, and Cilrhedyn would therefore be a pioneer.

Ffion Farnell, Director of Tir Coed then gave a presentation setting out the aim for Cilrhedyn as “To revive the Cilrhedyn woodland centre and develop its future to support the environment and people of the region. WiseWoods (the potential name for the project) will build on the existing enterprise and develop the ‘Woodland Hub’ principle, engaging local landowners and wider communities, providing local markets for timber from well managed woodlands and developing routes to employment for local people.” Four distinct business units were anticipated – timber production, which would include gates and park furniture, together with timber milling; a timber business incubator which would provide for product innovation and support for fledgling timber enterprises; a hub for project activities and staff; and office space for partnership staff.

It was anticipated that the project would be delivered in two phases – an initial restructuring (two year) phase which would aim to achieve a break-even financial position, followed by a full delivery phase during which it was intended to expand operations and increase trading from external sales whilst linking into wider pan-Wales opportunities. This was felt to be a realistic position rather than one of low aspiration.

Members asked a number of questions about the cash flow projection that had been supplied, and also noted the potential for other businesses and education providers to be involved in the site. The difficulty of the Authority being able to influence the rates for the building, as requested in the Business Plan, was noted, but officers expressed a willingness to help as far as possible. They added that it was hoped other elements of the plan, such as accommodation of the ranger and warden teams, could be dealt with as part of detailed negotiations.

It was **RESOLVED** that



- a) the business case being put forward by Coed Cymru/Tir Coed be endorsed 'in principle' and that authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to put in place the necessary arrangements to lease part of the site to Coed Cymru/Tir Coed by no later than March 31 2016 (subject to full analysis of revised business plan);
- b) the scaling back of the present activities at Cilrhedyn (in terms of the woodland centre/sawmill) be agreed in order to meet the budgetary targets for 2016-17 and endorsement of the advertising of the remaining building and yard space on the open market if the Tir Coed / Coed Cymru option failed.

[Councillor P Morgan disclosed a personal interest in the following report but remained in the meeting and played a full part in it; Councillor RM Lewis disclosed a prejudicial interest and withdrew from the meeting while it was discussed.]

7. Car Park Operations

The report of the Business and Performance Manager outlined the current situation with regard to the Authority's car park operations and explained that this had been considered by the Members' Task and Finish group on car parks, and their conclusions for changes in the management of the Authority's car parks were presented for Members' considerations.

The Chairman of the Group felt that the process had worked well, in that it was good to be informed and to exchange ideas in order to help develop proposals. Thanking the Group for their clear direction and useful discussions, the officer welcomed Marc Owen from Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC), who had been involved with the production of the Authority's revised Parking Order, to answer any questions.

Matters considered by the task and finish group were set out in the report, and the officer took Members through each of these in turn. Several Members expressed support for the principle of greater consistency and transferability of tickets between National Park and PCC car parks. There was some discussion on a number of points, particularly the free 30 minute 'pop to the shop' provision, and the introduction of charging at £1 per hour to a maximum of £5 per day. With regard to the proposed 'information ambassador' role, Members of the Working Group looking at the provision of information to visitors felt that agreement to offer assistance for funding such a role would be premature given that the Group would be looking at how information should be provided across the Authority in the coming months.

The cost of enforcement through PCC was also questioned. Officers confirmed that £12,500 had been paid for a five month trial period over the summer months, however revenue had increased across the car parks where random enforcement had taken place. It was also noted



that, as stated in the report, not all proposals could be taken forward until further amendments had been undertaken to the off-street parking order. This would be subject to consultation, and as a result some changes might not be implemented next season.

Taking the recommendations individually, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) the following changes be approved as soon as practical and subject to the relevant amendments to the off-street parking order:
 - i) Increase coach charges to £8 per day;
 - ii) Introduce free 30 minute 'pop and shop' tickets in some car parks, to include Poppit Sands and Newport;
 - iii) Introduce a season ticket valid in a single specified car park at £25;
 - iv) Remove transferability from PCNPA tickets;
 - v) Install pay & display machines at Newport and Poppit Sands with the provision of information ambassadors at Poppit to be referred to the Provision of Information to Visitors Working Group;
 - vi) Negotiate with PCC to include PCNPA car parks in the parking passport and similar schemes.

- b) The introduction of charging at £1 per hour up to a maximum of £5 at all car parks not be implemented at present.

- c) The following proposals be agreed subject to consultation, discussion and negotiation with relevant partners before being presented to Members for approval at a future meeting:
 - i) Install pay & display machines at Solva, with the provision of an information ambassador to be referred to the Provision of Information to Visitors Working Group;
 - ii) Introduce charging at Amroth, Penally, West Angle and Nolton Haven;
 - iii) Negotiate with PCC to prepare a revised off-street parking order in light of the above and to develop a service level agreement to manage the car parks.

8. Skrinkle Haven YHA Site: Freehold Disposal

It was reported that the Authority had a significant freehold ownership at Skrinkle Haven which had been acquired with full vacant possession in order to safeguard public access to the cliff lands and to facilitate the demolition of surplus military buildings and the remnants of a former sewage works site. One of the redundant military buildings was converted and adapted to meet the needs of the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) which they continued to operate under a lease from the Authority. Part of the Authority's freehold interest also included a right of way which it had full responsibility for maintaining and repairing, representing a significant long term liability. Negotiations had therefore been entered into with the YHA for their acquisition of the Authority's reversionary freehold of the land they lease, including the full length of the access



road. The parties had agreed that any such transfer would include a restriction over the future use of the subject land to that of a youth hostel and the reservation of a right of way for the benefit of the Authority's remaining land free of any ongoing or future maintenance liability.

One Member expressed some concern that the deal that had been agreed was not a good one for the Authority and questioned whether the land could be sold to the National Trust in order to recoup some of the money.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendation of the Property and Projects Group for the sale of the land coloured red on the map included with the report including the full length of the access road between 'A' and 'B' to the Youth Hostel Association at a price of £12,500, subject to the Authority being permanently released from any ongoing liability to maintain the access road between 'A', 'B' & 'C', reserved right of access for the benefit of the Authority's retained land along the access road between 'A', 'B' & 'C' and the placing of restrictions on the future use of the land to that of a Youth Hostel.

9. Freshwater East Caravan Club Site: Lease Renewal and Site Upgrade Works

It was reported that the facilities at the above mentioned site were dated and the Caravan Club, which leased the site, were concerned that in the absence of any upgrading there would be an ongoing decline in occupancy numbers and associated negative impact on the local visitor based economy. The turnover based rental income which the Authority received would also be adversely affected by any such long term decline. To arrest and reverse that trend, the Caravan Club were proposing to make a capital investment of approximately £1.2 million to upgrade the site facilities over the course of the winter. The Club was not willing to make this capital investment under the terms of their existing occupational lease and so officers had reached provisional agreement with them for the surrender of their existing lease and simultaneous granting of a new lease commencing 1st January 2016.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendation of the Property & Projects Group for the surrender and renewal of the Caravan Club lease be endorsed on the terms set out in the report to include the Authority's consent in its capacity as Landlord for the Caravan Club to undertake the physical upgrade and improvement of the site in accordance with planning permission NP/15/0401.

10. Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy

The Finance Manager reported that the above document replaced the previous Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and incorporated the changes to the bribery legislation that had been included in the Bribery Act 2010.



The document defined the Authority's position on fraud and bribery, detailed the strategy that it would follow to minimise the risks, described the procedures regarding detection and investigation and provided a detailed response plan to follow if fraud and/or bribery was suspected.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy be approved.

11. Review of Designated Landscapes

Members were reminded that in September 2014, the Minister for Natural Resources had commissioned an Independent Panel to conduct a review of designated landscapes in Wales. A copy of the final report had been published and had previously been distributed to Members. It made 69 recommendations covering a raft of proposals and observations on purposes, principles, vision, governance models, planning and funding.

The Welsh Government had announced that due to the considerable scale and scope of the recommendations, further work was now needed to understand their potential benefit and their consequences. Lord Dafydd Ellis-Thomas AM had been appointed to lead a Future Landscapes Working Group, involving representatives of the national parks, AONBs, interest groups, business and local government. The Chief Executive added that he and the Chairman would be attending a Seminar on 20th November at which the next stages would be discussed.

In summary, Members felt that the report was lacking in evidence for some of the conclusions it reached and expressed concern regarding the governance model proposed in the report - whereby two thirds of the membership of the Authority would appoint the remaining third; the proposed name change to 'National Landscapes of Wales' which was considered to be too vague; the unclear wording of the proposed third purpose; and that there was no need for the designation to include the sea areas as these were already adequately regulated.

NOTED.

12. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report 2016/17

It was reported that the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) had issued a draft Annual Report on the proposed level of Members' salaries for 2016/17 for consultation. Relevant extracts from the Panel's report were appended for Members' information, but, in essence, the Panel had decided that there would be no increase in the level of remuneration for the forthcoming year given the continuing constraints on local government spending. However reimbursement of accommodation costs had increased slightly.



It was proposed and seconded that a response be submitted to the IRPW stating that the Authority welcomed the provision for reimbursement of costs of care and the opportunity to decide on the level of remuneration to be paid, advising that it would be minded to recommend the lower level, however this motion was not carried.

It was **RESOLVED** that no response be submitted to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' draft Annual Report.

