

OPERATIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

9 December 2015

Present: Councillor R Kilmister (Chairman)
Councillors P Harries and P J Morgan, Mr A E Sangster and Mrs M Thomas.

[Councillor ML Evans and Ms C Gwyther arrived during consideration of Report 16/15 - Performance Report – Minute 4 refers]

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10:00am – 12.15pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S T Hudson and A Wilcox.

2. Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest

3. Minutes

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

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

4. Performance report for the period ending 31 October 2015

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 up to 31st October 2015 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.

At this stage of the year. most activities were well underway and all were on schedule. Members asked questions regarding several of the actions, and these were answered by officers. It was noted that 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 increased. Overall visitor numbers were down by about 3.6% and merchandise by 9%.

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



5. Risk Register

The Business and Performance Manager explained that the Risk Register report was in two parts. The first part reported on and responded to the internal audit report into the risk register. This then led on to the risk register itself, which had been revised in line with the audit recommendations.

Members commented favourably on the new Register but noted that the use of financial implications to assess the impact of risks was important, but needed to be considered in a more holistic manner as other impacts, such as those relating to reputation, could be greater.

NOTED.

6. Sustainable Events Guidance

The Health and Tourism Policy Officer explained that the Authority recognised that there were positive benefits that organised recreational events could bring, both by enriching people's experience of the unique outdoor environment and also contributing to the local economy. It was also important to ensure that any negative impacts such as increased coastal and inland erosion, disruption to wildlife and local communities was minimised.

Officers had therefore developed the sustainable events guidance, a copy of which was appended to the report, which was aimed particularly at medium to large scale sporting events such as Iron Man. The officer explained that an online checklist with interactive maps had also been developed, to be used alongside the guidance, which made organisers aware of restrictions and directed them towards areas most suitable for the type of activities they were proposing. This was demonstrated for the Committee.

Thanking the officer for the presentation, Members welcomed the guidance and asked whether events could be registered in a calendar in order to avoid clashes on busy weekends. The officer replied that this was something that could be developed in future, as well as case studies of best practice. The guidance had received input from organisations such as Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire Tourism and Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum and they, together with Welsh Government, had also promoted it as part of their marketing of the county. Members suggested that the coastal nature of the National Park was a unique selling point, and that other events could be targeted to encourage them to be held in the county.

NOTED.



7. Barn Owl Nest Box Scheme

The Conservation Officer explained to the Committee that since 2009 the Authority had distributed 44 boxes to landowners both within and outside the National Park, mainly located in farm buildings and on isolated trees. These were located near to barn owls' feeding habitat which consisted of tussocky grassland.

During 2014 a survey of the barn owl boxes was undertaken by a local ornithologist, and this revealed that 12% of boxes were being used by barn owls, and 21% by tawny owls. These numbers were quite low, however this was reflective of the long, cold spring and cool summer. A resurvey during 2015 found that 3 or 4 more boxes were in use which equated to about half the boxes being used. This was comparable to other counties where surveys had been carried out. The officer confirmed that this now formed a baseline, and surveys of the boxes would be carried out in future years.

Thanking the officer for an interesting report, one of the Members asked whether any publicity was given to the scheme or where advice on the placement of nesting boxes could be obtained as he believed many landowners would be happy to purchase boxes. The officer replied that she would be happy to advise landowners, however as the boxes were quite expensive, the Authority did not have money to supply many boxes in future.

NOTED.

8. Performance Report on the Arts Development Programme at Oriel y Parc to 30 November 2015

Members were reminded that Oriel y Parc Gallery and Visitor Centre operated as the Authority's gateway for visitors to St Davids and as an arts centre serving visitors and the local community. A programme of exhibitions and displays was provided in partnership with Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales (AC-NMW), alongside which ran a wider arts programme which included an annual programme of artist's studio residencies and participatory arts and creative learning activities that promoted engagement with and interpretation of the culture, heritage, landscape and environment of the National Park, as well as supporting and promoting the artistic and cultural life of the National Park.

In recent years, the focus of this wider programme had been two-fold – to develop and grow Oriel y Parc's reputation as an arts centre that produced great art; that encouraged and supported a vibrant and sustainable arts sector which made a significant contribution to promoting the National Park Authority's purposes and that supported learning, economic development and quality of life. In a time of financial constraint,



the Arts Development service had also taken steps to ensure a more supportive and sustainable environment within which arts at Oriol y Parc could develop and flourish, integral to which had been encouragement of partnership and collaboration.

The Arts Development Officer went on to outline several projects which had taken place at the centre including Môr Plastig by fine art photographer Mike Perry which creatively explored the impact of plastic detritus on the environment; and Ob:serve whereby Linda Norris spent six weeks observing naturalists on Skomer and this provided material for a body of work to be exhibited in the tower gallery during 2016. These more contemporary works provided a counterpoint to the exhibition programme delivered by AC-NMW and reflected the current interest in modern art for which there were few opportunities in Pembrokeshire.

Members were pleased with the engagement that had been developed with organisations such as Springboard and the officer noted that this element was being developed, with creative writing workshops planned for 2016. Work was also being done to encourage schools from the south of the county by providing a full-day programme which also included outdoor activities.

NOTED.

[Ms Chris Gwyther tendered her apologies and left the meeting during the following presentation]

9. Working with Natural Resources Wales

The report before the Committee set out the many areas of work where the Authority liaised with Natural Resources Wales (NRW); these included contributions towards management and maintenance of the National Trail, to various woodland schemes, to the Castlemartin Ranger post and towards repair of storm damage. In 2014/15, NRW's contributions totalled approximately £317,000.

The Chairman then welcomed Andrea Winterton, the Pembrokeshire Operations Manager for NRW, who provided an overview of some of that work. One area that she touched on was the likely designation of the Milford Haven catchment as Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) in the future which would undoubtedly present challenges as a result of diffuse pollution from slurry being imported into the National Park. She considered that this was unlikely to be helped by the construction of Anaerobic Digesters as these did not remove the nitrate. The improvements to water quality leading to the blue flag status of many beaches was also discussed, although it was acknowledged that there was a danger in becoming complacent about this, as well as NRW's duty under the Environment Act to produce a state of natural resources report which would lead to greater environmental monitoring across the country.



Members also raised concerns regarding late responses from NRW to planning applications, and future grant funding. Ms Winterton replied that while planning was not an area under her control, the organisation did have stringent targets to meet the Authority's timescales and regular liaison meetings were held at which this issue had been raised. With regard to funding, this was a challenge for all public bodies and NRW would be looking at different ways of delivering services which would undoubtedly have implications for the Authority.

Thanking Ms Winterton for attending the committee that morning, and expressing the Authority's thanks to NRW for their work, the report was **NOTED**.

10. Forward Work Programme

As discussed previously, a number of topics had been identified by Members and officers for future consideration by the Committee and these had been arranged into a suggested two-year forward programme. This proposed that the next meeting would consider the management of car parks in supporting sustainable tourism outcomes and performance of the Coast Path and options for future funding. It was also suggested that an assessment of the Authority's schools programme be considered and there was a request for an item on the enhancement of the biodiversity of the National Park, as opposed to its conservation.

It was **RESOLVED** that reports on the Coast Path, Schools Programme and enhancement of biodiversity would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

11. 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.