

# OPERATIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

21 September 2016

Present: Councillor ML Evans, Ms C Gwyther, Councillors P Harries, ST Hudson, R Kilmister and P J Morgan, Mrs M Thomas and Councillor A Wilcox.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 12:00pm – 1.15pm)

## 1. Apology

An apology for absence was received from Mr A E Sangster.

## 2. Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest

## 3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 29 June 2016 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2016 be confirmed and signed.

## 4. Performance report for the period ending 31 July 2016

The Chair welcomed the recently appointed Performance and Compliance Coordinator to her first meeting of the Committee. She reported that the performance report followed the structure of the Corporate Plan for 2016/17; this followed the approach of the Well-being of Future Generations Act with seven well-being objectives, and an additional section providing general governance information.

The report showed the performance to date for the first four months of the new financial year, together with the associated RAG (Red-Amber-Green) status for each action. Progress on each action was set out in the report, however at this stage in the year most activities had only recently commenced.

It was noted that there had been an increase in visitor numbers at the Authority's sites and Centres overall compared to the same period last year, and an increase in overall merchandise sales, however the improved performance was not consistent across the sites. Members felt that the graphs provided were helpful and were surprised that visitor numbers at Castell Henllys were not higher and asked whether lessons could be learnt from Carew where numbers had increased. The Director of Discovery and Delivery replied that that given recent investment, the number of visitors to the site was disappointing and it was hoped that this would improve in future.



There was also some discussion regarding changing patterns of online engagement with a decrease in website hits compared to last year but an increase in the number of Facebook followers. One Member commented on the introduction of town centre Wi-Fi by Pembrokeshire County Council and hoped that the Authority would be working with them over the winter to make best use of the opportunities that it offered for accessing information. He added that as the Wi-Fi was provided on a three year trial, it may not be retained unless use was made of it.

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

#### **5. Review of the National Park Authority's Education Service**

The Discovery Team Leader apologised that the incorrect covering report had been provided and drew the Committee's attention to the replacement report which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The report explained that the Authority's work with schools could be broadly divided into four areas and more detail was given on each of these in the review report. It noted that overall the service performed well, and when compared to other National Parks in the UK, beneficiary numbers were high. The education services offered were long established and highly rated by schools, teachers and pupils, with a broad range of topics and offer opportunities across the National Park for learners. While there were a lot of providers working with schools across the county, the nature of the service provided by the Authority was unique in some cases. Although it was acknowledged that the Education Service did not make a massive contribution towards income it was reasonably healthy and it was noted that outdoor and environmental education services offered to schools were frequently subsidised.

Members agreed that work with schools was important and fed into several of the Authority's corporate objectives, they also welcomed the recent introduction of the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools initiative. One Member noted that the education programme contained a lot of woodland activities, and hoped that the regeneration of Penlan could be used as a focus for these, however he also suggested that a greater emphasis should be placed on coastal activities given the Park's unique nature in that respect. Another idea put forward was that children could work towards a group of credits throughout their academic life which would teach them about different aspects of the National Park, particularly drawing on a sense of place to bring these together.

Officers replied that these were interesting ideas and agreed that perhaps a more strategic and coordinated approach needed to be taken, with a greater focus given to what was distinctive about the National Park and the services it provided.



**NOTED.**

**6. Partnership Work in relation to Recreation Management, with a focus on work at Castlemartin**

The Ranger Service Manager explained that the Castlemartin Ranger Partnership was managed by the Authority and part funded by the Ministry of Defence's Conservation Stewardship Fund and Joint Working Partnership with Natural Resources Wales. Her report outlined the background to the partnership, the current funding arrangements and the outcomes and measures identified to meet the aim that the military ranges in Pembrokeshire were managed in a way that integrated their military function with the high landscape and recreational value and conserved their important conservation features. These were assessed through working with stakeholders, a programme of conservation monitoring and review of the Integrated Land Management Plan.

The Castlemartin Ranger went on to highlight some of the significant achievements of the partnership since the creation of her role in 2003. These included creation of the Castlemartin Range Trail, Manorbier range guided tours, working with climbers and cavers, beach cleans and work with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

Members congratulated the officers on the report and presentation and recalled an excellent site visit to the Range last year. They asked about the ongoing relationship with surfers and sea kayakers discussed on that visit. The Ranger replied that she was working with the National Trust to improve the boundary signage and the beach lifeguards were helping to promote the message. Members welcomed the opportunity to visit the Range again in future.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report on partnership working at Castlemartin be noted and that a site visit to the range be arranged.

**7. Conservation Land Management Report 2015-16**

The report of the Biodiversity Officer set out what outcomes were being achieved for the National Park through its conservation land management work. Conservation work was carried out on over one hundred sites, a total of approximately 4178 hectares, aimed at benefitting priority habitats and species, and was achieved through the management of the Authority's owned or leased estate and also through working in partnership with private landowners through the 'Conserving the Park' scheme. In addition staff were engaged in specific projects, either through direct delivery or as part of a partnership; examples included the Pembrokeshire Grazing Network, Pembrokeshire Fire Safety Partnership, and control of the non-native species through the 'Stitch in Time' project.



The work was undertaken by the Park Direction, Warden and Ranger Teams, assisted by volunteers.

Members thanked the officer for the report which pulled together information on many excellent projects in one place and demonstrated how they fitted into the work of the Authority as a whole. They asked whether there was capacity for the role of volunteers to grow, and the officer replied that there was limited capacity due to the time needed to manage volunteers and this was currently done mainly through the Ranger Service which managed the Authority's Voluntary Wardens. They also asked whether it was a long process for sites to join the Conserving the Park scheme and it was noted that it was an easy process although the scheme was not widely advertised due to limited capacity and participants were usually referred by officers or Natural Resources Wales.

**NOTED.**

## **8. 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.

During their recent internal audit, Gateway Assure had advised that they felt that in view of the policies and procedures that should shortly be in place, the risk of a major IT failure or virus attack should be revised to a lower more appropriate level. Accordingly following discussion, the risk register had been amended. No other risks had been amended or removed.

Members believed that the argument for reducing the risk level seemed reasonable due to the strategies in place and supported the change in risk level for a major IT failure or virus attack.

It was **RESOLVED** that the risk register be amended to reduce the flag for risk 20 Major IT failure or virus attack from red to amber.

## **9. 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.

