

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

30 November 2016

Present: Councillor M James (Chair)

Mr D Ellis, Ms C Gwyther, Councillor P Harries, Councillor S Hudson, Councillor L Jenkins, Councillor R Kilmister, Councillor RM Lewis, Councillor PJ Morgan, Councillor R Owens, Councillor D Rees, Mr AE Sangster, Mrs M Thomas, Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor M Williams.

Mrs E Williams and Ms K Maddock-Jones who were taking part in the Authority's Mentoring scheme were also present.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10.00am – 1.10pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Archer, Councillor ML Evans and Mrs G Hayward.

2. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman noted that this was the last meeting of the Authority to be attended by Mrs Melinda Thomas and Mr David Ellis and he thanked them both for their commitment to the Authority and for their contribution to its debates. He said it had been a pleasure working with them and wished them well for the future. He added that Mrs Thomas had served for 5 years and today was her last day with the Authority as she moved on to pastures new, while Mr Ellis would have served the maximum 10 years when he finished on the 31st January 2017.

The Chief Executive added that he understood that an advertisement for the posts would be issued in January. He also noted that the Member Mentoring scheme which the Authority had been running had now come to an end and he thanked the three Mentees, and those who had mentored them, for their participation.

3. Disclosures of Interest

Personal disclosures of interest were received from Councillors R Lewis, P Morgan and L Jenkins in respect of report 61/16 Review of Car Parking Sites and they therefore remained in the room and took full part in the debate.

Councillor M Williams disclosed a prejudicial interest in respect of report 66/16 Tourist Information Provision and withdrew from the room while it was discussed.

Councillor P Harries disclosed a possible prejudicial interest in respect of report 66/16 Tourist Information Provision, however he explained that he



had been granted a dispensation by the Authority's Standards Committee to speak and vote on the matter so he remained and took full part in the debate.

Councillor D Rees, Councillor R Lewis and Mr D Ellis disclosed a prejudicial interest in report 67/16 Review of Designated areas action programme to tackle nitrate pollution in Wales and withdrew from the room while it was discussed.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 28 September 2016 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2016 be confirmed and signed.

5. Matters arising from the minutes:

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

6. 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 Committee held on 7 September 2016
- (ii) Operational Review Committee held on 21 September 2016
- (iii) Standards Committees held on 12 October 2016 and 9 November 2016
- (iv) Member Development Strategy Working Group held on 19 October 2016
- (v) Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee held on 9 November 2016

7. The Greenways Partnership – Annual Report 2016

The Chairman welcomed Owen Roberts, the Greenways Officer, to the meeting. Members were reminded that the Greenways Partnership comprised of public and community organisations and groups involved in the promotion and delivery of sustainable travel throughout the County and the Authority had been a partner since its establishment in the 1990s. It was noted that the National Park Authority made an annual financial contribution to the partnership of approximately £72,000 which assisted in the delivery of the Coastal Bus Services, Tenby Park and Ride scheme, the Bikemobility Initiative and also part-funded the post of the Greenways Officer, employed by Pembrokeshire County Council.

Appended to the report was the Pembrokeshire Greenways Annual Report which set out the main achievements to date for 2016 and the challenges to be faced for the year ahead. The Greenways Officer highlighted the success of the coastal bus service, and noted that figures showed an increase compared to last year, particularly those for the



Celtic Coaster on the St Davids Peninsula. Members asked about plans for those services that were not doing so well, such as the Coastal Cruiser which had suffered reduced passenger numbers in recent years. The Officer explained that there had been a number of changes to the timetable of this service as a result of funding cuts and the operator, Silcox Coaches, ceasing to trade. It was hoped that a suitable revised timetable would be provided from 1st April and this would then be promoted to local businesses, visitors and residents alike.

One Member also referred to the second park and ride service in Tenby that had previously operated from Tenby North Beach Car Park to the Harbour and asked if there were any plans to re-introduce it. Officers replied that alternative sources of funding had been sought so that the service could be reintroduced but so far this had been unsuccessful. Only a small contribution was received from large local businesses which benefited from the Salterns service, and the Member asked that renewed efforts be made to increase funding from that source so that greater subsidy could be made available to run a second service.

The Chairman thanked Mr Owen for his presentation and the report was **NOTED.**

8. Corporate Plan 2017/18

Members were reminded that the Wellbeing of Future Generations legislation required public bodies to publish a plan showing how it would deliver towards the well-being goals and how it had applied the sustainable development principle in its work. The draft Corporate Plan therefore developed the Authority's well-being objectives which could also be considered as its improvement objectives and set out actions, measures and outcomes to measure progress.

The plan presented was still very much a draft plan which would be the subject of consultation and Members were invited to approve the approach and comment on the content. The final version of the Corporate Plan would be presented to Members for approval in April.

Members asked that within the first objective to support and encourage the development of sustainable employment and businesses a measure be included which recorded the number of suppliers paid within 14 days as he felt that this was one of the greatest contributions to the local economy that the Authority could make. They also suggested that the Authority's role in education made a greater contribution to global well-being than suggested in actions relating to Objective 7. Finally Members asked for an overview of the Plans produced by the Authority and how they linked together and officers agreed to provide this.

NOTED.



9. Review of the Operation and Management of the Authority's Car Parking Sites

Members were reminded that the Authority's car park operation had been subject of a Member Task and Finish Group in 2015 and a paper had subsequently been presented to the National Park Authority in November when a number of resolutions were made. The Authority's Support Services Working Group had reviewed the subject matter again on 5th October with the aim of providing a longer term view of the Authority's car parking operations and the issues which it presented. The report before the Authority considered how car park operations could best be re-structured in pursuit of an improved service and pricing structure for both visitors to the area and local residents with a specific focus on delivering an equitable and efficient business model across the authority's entire portfolio of car parks, both charging and non-charging.

The Estates Officer displayed a map showing the location of the Authority's 37 car parks. He explained that 30 currently offered free parking, and with the exception of the four previously identified - Amroth, Penally, West Angle and Nolton Haven - the remainder were unlikely to be suitable for charging. Gross receipts were reported as approximately £500,000, and allowing for costs of operation including capital investment, approximately £300,000 was a revenue surplus. Whilst it was inevitable that complaints were received, these were very small in number and the majority of users – both visitors and locals– were happy with the benefits that were provided.

The report went on to set out a number of recommendations which officers felt would provide a simple, consistent and contemporary car park operation. These included a consistent charging policy, streamlined season ticket offer, free short stay parking, signage, enforcement and future cashless payment models. At the meeting Members were asked to consider the recommendation that the development, implementation and working of the car parking operation be delegated to the Chief Executive, rather than the Estates Officer via the Property and Projects Group as stated in the report, with targets and strategy proposals being presented to Members every 3 years.

The Officer answered a number of questions from Members regarding the costs of contactless payment, which it was hoped would not be significant but for which money had been allocated; and the costs and mechanisms of enforcement, which it was intended to review. There was also some concern expressed with regard to authorising Rangers/Senior Wardens to carry out enforcement as it was feared this could compromise their existing role. Another Member asked whether the Authority was subject to the Road Traffic Act 1984 as this governed the purposes for which car park revenue could be used. The Monitoring Officer advised that the Act



was large and comprehensive and while he believed the Authority was acting in accordance with the law, he agreed to look into the matter further. A concern was raised about the security of a £70 season ticket being displayed on a dashboard where that ticket did not contain a registration number and the officer was asked to consider whether an address code of some sort could be included. He was also asked to look at the proposed words 'minimum payment 5p' on the signage regarding voluntary donations out of season, however there was continued support for such contributions.

The recommendation as written in the report to the Authority was then proposed and seconded, but an amendment was also put which substituted 'delegated to the Chief Executive with targets and strategy proposals being presented to Members at least annually' as some Members were concerned about proper governance if presentations were made only every three years. A vote was taken on the amendment and this was won.

It was **RESOLVED** that the development, implementation and working of car park operations be delegated to the Chief Executive with targets and strategy proposals being presented to Members at least annually.

[Mr T Sangster tendered his apologies and left the meeting at this juncture.]

10. Update on Plans for the National Park Site at Cilrhedyn

Members were reminded that at the Authority meeting in February 2016, it was agreed to work with a partnership of Coed Cymru and Tir Coed to find a new way to use the centre at Cilrhedyn and to reduce the costs of operation for the Authority. An update was provided to the Authority in July and a new progress report was attached for Members' information.

The update explained that progress had been made in obtaining grants towards the Coed Cymru post that the partnership hoped to base at the centre, but their plans for funding the centre itself depended on a grant application, the outcome of which would not be known until the end of March 2017. This put the possibility of a transfer of the building at Cilrhedyn back to June/July next year which was a significant delay on the original timescale, however it retained the benefit to the Authority that the site continued in a beneficial timber-related use while allowing continued use by the Authority as a warden and ranger base. In the interim, the North Warden team continued to manage the centre and provide most of the countryside furniture required by the Authority. A meeting had been arranged with the Partnership during December to discuss arrangements further.



Although Members were disappointed in the slow progress, they were hopeful that the outcome would be worth the wait.

It was **RESOLVED** that Officers were authorised to continue to work with the partnership to agree interim arrangements for early 2017 with a view to agreeing a transfer as soon after the confirmation of available funding in late March 2017.

11. Country Path User Survey 2015-16

The report informed Members of the results of the country path user survey and how this information would be used to guide the future development and management of the Coast Path and public rights of way in the National Park.

With the agreement of the Chairman, this item was moved to become the final item on the agenda. However in the event there was insufficient time to consider the report and it was agreed that presentations be made to the next meetings of the Authority's Operational Review and Audit and Corporate Service Review Committees.

NOTED.

12. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report 2017/18

The Administration and Democratic Services Manager informed Members that the above mentioned consultation draft Annual Report on the proposed level of Members' salaries for 2017/18 had been published. Extracts from the report had been circulated and the main points were outlined in the report, and Members views were sought, particularly in respect of whether additional Senior Salaries should be paid to the Chairs of Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee and the Operational Review Committee, and if so at what level of remuneration; and also whether the implementation date from which the Panel's determinations take effect should be 1st April 2017 as set out in the draft Annual Report, or the date of the Authority's Annual General Meeting (AGM) as in previous years.

Declaring an interest as Chairs of the Audit and Corporate Services and Operational Review Committees, the two Members agreed that they did not feel the responsibilities they held merited payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance. It was noted that Members who had chaired the two Scrutiny Committees in recent years had undertaken considerable additional work and consideration could be given in future to payment of that post.



With regard to the implementation date, Members understood that for the Panel's determinations to take effect from the date of the AGM would be practically simpler for officers and this was supported.

It was **RESOLVED** that a response be submitted to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' draft Annual Report to the effect that
a) no additional Senior Salaries should be sought at this time; and
b) the date for implementation of the Panel's determinations should be the date of the Authority's Annual General Meeting.

[There followed a 5 minute comfort break]

13. A Review of the Sustainable Development Fund 2000 - 2016

Members were reminded that the Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) provides support for innovative sustainable projects that demonstrate practical solutions for a more sustainable way of life. Following a request from Members, a report had been produced which reviewed the financial support awarded to projects between 2000 and 2016 to ascertain whether public money had been wisely spent and whether projects that received funding were still operational today.

It was reported that 201 projects had been supported and SDF funding had attracted nearly £5.3 million of match funding, with 17 of the 21 projects randomly selected for more in-depth analysis successfully achieving their goals and continuing to operate. However due to the variety of types and size of projects supported, identifying common criteria for success had been difficult. The officer reported that the greatest impact of the fund had been in supporting innovative projects which had an element of risk and which therefore may not have received funding from any other source.

Members thanked the officer for the report and the hard work that had gone into its production, however one Member felt that there should be greater ongoing accountability and hoped that those projects that were no longer operational had left some sort of a legacy for their communities. The officer replied that it was a requirement of the fund that projects had to benefit the National Park and/or its communities, however given the emphasis on experimentation, failures were to be expected. Consideration could be given to including a requirement for longer term monitoring of projects progress to be built into the awarding criteria in the future.

Several Members of the SDF Committee thanked the officer for her work with projects. They noted that while not every project the Committee had supported had been successful, all were looked at in great detail and in accordance with strong governance arrangements. Regular updates on current projects were also provided to the Committee, together with an



annual report. It was also noted that the existence of the fund supported several of the objectives in the draft corporate plan and it was hoped that it would continue in the future.

NOTED.

14. Tourist Information Provision

Members were reminded that at the previous meeting of the Authority they had resolved to consult on proposals to change the way visitor information services were delivered in Tenby and Newport in the future. Members unanimously agreed to the Authority changing the nature of its current delivery in order to invest in a package of new initiatives aimed at supporting the growth of the wider visitor economy in Pembrokeshire. A formal public consultation had taken place in addition to a consultation with staff impacted by the proposals and relevant trade unions. Public meetings had also been held in both locations, together with other meetings with stakeholder groups regarding both the impacts of any potential changes and the opportunities to delivery services differently.

[Councillor M Williams disclosed an interest in the following element of the item and withdrew from the meeting while it was considered. Councillor R Owens was not present when the vote was taken.]

a) Tenby

It was reported that attendance at the public meeting in Tenby had been low, and comments received both at the meeting and subsequently pointed to a perceived duplication of service between the Authority's Visitor Centre and Pembrokeshire County Council's Tourist Information Centre. In addition more outlets (public, private and voluntary) now stocked a lot of similar publicity materials to those found at Tenby National Park Visitor Centre.

Discussions had taken place with both the Museum and Town Council with regard to future opportunities and the latter had also agreed to set up a group with other stakeholders to discuss how information could be provided to visitors and residents in the town.

The paper presented to the Authority on 28 September outlined the financial implications of changing the nature of the service in the Tenby area. It was reported that the property was leased until 2019, and an estimate of an early surrender of this would equate to £160k, although negotiation of a reduced sum had been sought, although no response had been received to date. However even at the worst case scenario set out in the report, there was still a financial benefit to making a decision to close the building.



One Member suggested that relocation of staff to the County Council's Tourist Information Centre should be explored and suggested an amendment to that effect. However others noted that the Provision of Information to Visitors Working Group had recommended to the Authority that services should not be tied to buildings but should be taken out into the town but pointed out that such discussions could take place as part of the 'package of activities' proposed in the recommendation. The Member therefore withdrew his amendment.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) The closure of the public facing element of the Tenby Visitor Centre no later than the 28th February 2017 be approved.
- 2) The surrender of the lease for Tenby Visitor Centre at a date to be agreed following 31st March 2017 be approved, depending on operational needs of the Authority
- 3) Work to commence immediately to invest in a package of activities to deliver visitor information in the Tenby area.

[Councillor P Harries disclosed a possible prejudicial interest, however he explained that he had been granted a dispensation by the Authority's Standards Committee to speak and vote on the matter so he remained and took full part in the debate.

Ms C Gwyther tendered her apologies and left the meeting during the course of the following debate and was not present for the vote.]

b) Newport

It was reported that the Authority received a significant number of responses to the consultation relating to the proposed changes to visitor services in Newport including correspondence from a newly established group entitled the Newport Visitor Centre Action Group which was established 'to investigate, challenge and oppose closure of the National Park Visitor Centre in Newport'. The public meeting was extremely well attended and an online petition had attracted over 1000 signatories all of whom opposed the closure of the Visitor Centre.

As a result of the responses opposing the proposed service changes in Newport, officers had held a number of additional meetings with local bodies and stakeholder groups to both explain the Authority's current position and to explore alternative ways of delivering visitor services in and around Newport. However to ensure that the Authority could fully address the issues raised via the formal public consultation, it was proposed that any formal decision on changes to visitor services in Newport be deferred until a future National Park Authority meeting. The additional time would be used specifically to explore new long-term sustainable models for delivering visitor services in Newport in partnership with public, private and voluntary sector bodies in the locality.



Members welcomed the opportunity for further discussion on the way forward in Newport and believed that the recommendation would address the immediate concerns of the community. However it was noted that while extending the consultation period to look at the alternatives was the correct response in the circumstances, the Provision of Information to Visitors Working Group had been unanimous that the running of information centres by the Authority was not sustainable in the long term and that different models needed to be delivered.

There was some discussion regarding the parties to be consulted in Newport, given the number of different groups which had an interest. It was clarified that the Town Council had a democratic mandate however it was noted that the groups in Newport worked well together and the Authority would continue to engage with all parties. It was hoped that credible plans would begin to emerge by the February meeting of the Authority, in which case Members were open to the possibility of the Newport Centre remaining open for the 2017 tourist season to allow further discussion, with the view that any changes be implemented during early 2018.

It was **RESOLVED** that extension of the period of consultation and engagement regarding potential changes to the future provision of visitor services in Newport be approved.

[Councillor M Williams abstained from voting on the above resolution]

[Councillors R Lewis and D Rees and Mr D Ellis disclosed an interest in the following item and withdrew from the meeting while it was considered. Councillor M Williams was not present for the vote on the following item.]

15. Review of the Designated Areas and Action Programme to Tackle Nitrate Pollution in Wales

It was reported that Welsh Government was consulting on proposals to reduce nitrate pollution related to agriculture, and views and evidence were sought on: (1) options for future designation of Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) – specifically whether to continue to designate discrete NVZs or instead to apply nitrate action measures across the whole of Wales; and (2) proposed changes to the measures implemented within NVZs.

Ensuring water quality was a key part of the Authority's first purpose and officers supported focussing effort and resources on those areas where the problems originate, rather than implementation of an all-Wales scheme, considering this to be fairer and more equitable. They recognised the current social and economic significance of the dairy industry to the local economy and there was real concern that NVZ designation would result in additional cost and burdens that would affect



profitability; it was therefore hoped that assistance would be provided in the transitional phase.

The Authority's proposed response to the consultation was set out in the report and Members agreement was sought.

Members expressed concern that if a Milford Haven Inner Waterbody NVZ were designated, there would be displacement of effluent to the area outside the NVZ which fell largely within the National Park. This would have implications for the Authority's planning role through a possible increase in applications for micro and macro scale anaerobic digesters and large scale slurry storage. Officers did not believe that this would happen to any great extent and were confident that the Authority's framework for dealing with applications, the Local Development Plan, Supplementary Guidance and slurry store guidance notes, was fit for purpose.

Other Members expressed concerns regarding the impact of the proposed legislation on the farming community and one did not believe that creation of NVZs was the answer. An amendment to the response preferring a whole Wales NVZ designation was then proposed and second, but this vote was lost. A vote was then taken on the substantive motion to agree the proposed consultation response set out in the report as the Authority's response to the consultation, and this was won.

It was **RESOLVED** that the proposed consultation response set out in the report be agreed as the Authority's response to the consultation on the review of the Designated Areas and Action Programme to tackle Nitrate Pollution in Wales.

