

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

9 August 2017

Present: Mrs G Hayward (Chair)

Mr A Archer, Councillor Mrs D Clements, Ms C Gwyther, Councillor P Harries, Mrs J James, Councillor M James, Councillor PJ Morgan, Mr AE Sangster and Councillor M Williams.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 1.10pm – 3.00pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Baker, Councillor K Doolin, Councillor M Evans, Dr R Heath-Davies, Councillor P Kidney, Councillor R Owens, Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor S Yelland.

2. Welcome

The Chair welcomed Mr Derek Evans from Wales Audit Office to the meeting. She also wished a very happy birthday to Ms Chris Gwyther.

3. Announcements

The Chair announced that she had attended the following events on behalf of the Authority:

- PLANED conference on the subject of Working together in Communities;
- Cross Party Group on Rural Affairs reception at the Senedd for Future Landscapes Wales when an interesting talk was given by Professor Terry Marsden;
- A meeting, by Video Conference, of the Future Landscapes Wales Working Group Chaired by Lord Dafydd Ellis Thomas;
- Reception hosted by the Coal Authority which emphasised their desire to work with Authorities through the planning system;
- Radio Pembrokeshire Business Awards, and
- Royal Welsh Show when a wonderful presentation was given to the Minister by ArboCulture on the use of Compost Heat Recovery to kiln dry firewood; a project funded by the Authority's Sustainable Development Fund.

4. Disclosures of Interest

Mr A Archer disclosed a personal but not prejudicial interest in report 31/17 but remained in the meeting while it was discussed.

5. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings (AGM and Ordinary meetings) held on the 14 June 2017 were presented for confirmation and signature.



It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the AGM and Ordinary meetings held on 14 June 2017 be confirmed and signed.

6. Matters arising

(a) St Davids City of Culture (Item 4(a), Ordinary Meeting: 14 June 2017)

It was reported that St Davids' bid to be City of Culture in 2021 had been unsuccessful. Some positive feedback had been received and more detailed feedback would be given in due course. The Chief Executive wished Swansea City and County Council well with their bid.

7. 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 10 May, 14 June, 21 June and 3 July 2017;
- (ii) Standards Committee held on 28 June 2017;
- (iii) Sustainable Development Fund Committee held on 28 June 2017;
- (iv) Operational Review Committee held on 5 July 2017, and
- (v) Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee held on 19 July 2017.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- (a) that, the reports of the meetings of the Development Management Committee be received, and
- (b) that, the reports of the meetings of the Standards Committee, Operational Review Committee and Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee be adopted, and
- (c) that the report of the meeting of the Sustainable Development Fund be adopted, subject to the fact that Mrs J James had been unable to attend the meeting and had presented her apologies, and that Dr R Heath Davies had attended the meeting in her place being recorded.

8. Standards Committee Appointments Panel

In the report considered at the Authority's Annual General Meeting on 14 June 2017, Councillor M Williams was named as a Member on the above-mentioned Panel. However, he had since been elected Chair of Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee and, as a result, sat on the Panel in that capacity also. Nominations were therefore sought for another Member to replace him as the named Member.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor S Yelland be appointed as the named Member on the Standards Committee Appointments Panel.

9. ISA260 Report to those Charged with Governance

Apologising for the delay in sending out this report, due to the changing Audit timetable, Mr Derek Evans from the Wales Audit Office (WAO)



thanked the Finance Manager and his team for their assistance in carrying out the Audit, and rising admirably to the challenges presented by the new timetable. He explained that the Auditor General intended to issue an unqualified audit report on the financial statements, there being no significant issues arising from the audit. There were two adjustments of a technical nature, that had been corrected by management and these were set out in Appendix 3 of the report. There were also a few minor corrections, but these had not raised any concerns and were presentational issues rather than substantive problem areas.

Turning to the statement of accounts 2016/17 which accompanied the report, Members were concerned about the reduction in core funding experienced by the Authority which amounted to 25% in real terms. This would become more and more challenging for both officers and Members. They also asked about the governance of the Dyfed Pension Fund and were advised that this was independently managed and was currently one of the better performing funds across the public sector. Mr Evans added that the Wales Audit Office engaged the services of a consulting actuary, which looked at all pension funds to see if the assumptions made by each fund were reasonable. The Chief Executive added that membership of the scheme had never been a risk to the Authority, but that it was kept under review.

In response to a query from Members, the Finance Manager pointed out that the apparent increase in revenue funding shown in the accounts summary table was due to additional grant being made by Welsh Government to fund specific projects, and that this was explained in more detail in the body of the accounts. Members thanked the Finance Manager and his team for their work in preparing the accounts.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The ISA260 Report from the Wales Audit Office be accepted; and
- b) the Statement of Accounts 2016/17 be approved and signed.

10. Priorities for National Park Authorities 2017-18

It was reported that the Chair of the Authority had received a letter from the Minister for Environment and Rural Affairs outlining the priorities for National Park Authorities for 2017-18 as identified by the Welsh Government. The letter was appended to the report for Members' information.

Members asked how these priorities would be fed into the Authority's corporate planning process and were advised that the Corporate and Resources Plan 2017/18 had been approved by the Authority in March 2017, however any new priorities would still be progressed and performance would be reported to the Authority's Review Committees.



It was **RESOLVED** that the report and letter from the Minister for Environment and Rural Affairs be noted.

11. Improvement Plan Part 2 and Annual Report on meeting Well-Being Objectives 2016/17

Members were reminded that under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the Authority was required to publish an Improvement Plan Part 2 by 31st October. The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 also placed a duty on the Authority to set out its Well-being Objectives and to demonstrate how these contributed to the Welsh Government's seven Well-being Goals.

Each year bodies were required to publish an annual report showing the progress they had made in meeting their objectives. The document before Members was both the Authority's Improvement Plan Part 2 and its Annual Report on progress made against its Well-being Objectives.

This report outlined progress against the work programme proposed in the Corporate Plan for the year 2016/17. In order to reduce resource requirements the three National Park Authorities in Wales had agreed to work to a common format of a Corporate Plan which complied with the relevant legislation.

Members congratulated officers on a very good report which they considered to be a well-illustrated, fascinating and informative read which provided a good understanding of the Authority's aims.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Improvement Plan Part 2 and Annual Report on meeting Well-being Objectives 2016/17 be approved.

[Councillor P Harries tendered his apologies and left the meeting during consideration of the following report.]

12. Welsh Government Consultation: Taking Forward Wales' Sustainable Management of Natural Resources

It was reported that the Welsh Government had issued the above mentioned document for consultation with an extended closing date for comments of 28 September 2017. Extracts from the consultation document which had the most relevance to the work of the Authority were appended to the report, with the full document available from the Welsh Government website. The report identified which officers were dealing with which Chapters of the consultation and Members were invited to provide comments, if not at the meeting itself, to the relevant officer by 16 August at the latest.

It was intended to provide a response on behalf of the three Welsh National Park Authorities. It was reported at the meeting that although



the deadline for receipt of comments had been extended since writing the report before Members, authority was still sought for agreement of the response to be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the Authority.

Members acknowledged that this was a very large body of work and provided some comments on the consultation, noting that in certain areas there was a lack of clarity and detail, leading to any proposals being interpreted in more ways than one and raised more questions than answers.

It was **RESOLVED** that delegated power be provided to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Authority's Chair, to submit a response to the Welsh Government Consultation Document 'Taking Forward Wales' Sustainable Management of Natural Resources'.

13. Newgale Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance Stage 1 Assessment Report (July 2017)

Members were reminded that a report commissioned by Pembrokeshire County Council and published in December 2014 had detailed that the shingle bank forming the coastal defences at Newgale was likely to be over-topped with increasing frequency, leading to it becoming unsustainable to maintain it in its current location within the next 10 to 20 years. As a result a study had been commissioned by the Council in 2016 to examine how the community of Newgale and surrounding areas could adapt to the changes being brought as a result. The study was due to be completed at the end of July 2017.

Feeding into the overall study was the assessment of realignment options for the road which currently ran immediately behind the shingle bank through the village, and in February 2016, the County Council had appointed consultants, Atkins, to undertake a Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) Stage 1 Assessment of four options.

A summary of the Stage 1 Assessment Report, which concluded that two options warranted further investigation, was provided in the report before Members that day. Officers advised that these were both difficult scenarios and were virtually incomparable with each other; there were dis-benefits to both proposals, including visual impact and loss of priority habitats. Officers reported that, although the Council had taken on board a lot of the Authority's initial concerns, it was considered that further investigation was needed into what work –if any – could be undertaken to mitigate against the concerns raised, and whether any of the original proposals would need to be revisited as a result. The proposed National Park Authority response to the Assessment Report was also set out, and Members' approval of this was sought.



Members acknowledged that the situation was such that doing nothing was not an option. However, concerns were raised about whether a scheme could be delivered and what the financial implications would be for future maintenance. It was hoped that a greater financial commitment could be provided by Welsh Government to enable a proposal to be delivered. It was also suggested that the economic redevelopment of RNAS Brawdy could possibly be a facilitating factor in the delivery of a suitable scheme.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be approved as the Authority's formal response on the Newgale Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) Stage 1 Assessment Report July 2017, subject to inclusion of the comments made at the meeting..

14. Properties known as 'Woodside' and 'Avalon', Freshwater East

It was reported that in 2001 the Authority had acquired the freehold of a large area of land at Freshwater East known as the 'Burrows', the land being characterised by a long and complex boundary abutting numerous separate third party ownerships, many of which were residential dwellings. The history of two of those dwellings, Woodside and Avalon was set out in the report before Members that day, and it was reported that officers had reached 'in principle' agreements with the owners of those properties to regularise encroachments over the Authority's registered freehold title at a nominal price of £1, to include restrictive covenants limiting its future use and undertakings to meet the Authority's reasonably incurred legal costs in documenting the transfers.

Members were reminded that the Authority's adopted policy authorised the legal transfer of National Park owned land to adjoining property owners in instances where encroachments fell within clearly defined guidelines, i.e. the encroachment was longstanding, small scale, did not materially compromise the Authority's statutory objectives and did not release significant value to the transferee.

It was **RESOLVED**, in accordance with the Adopted Encroachment Policy, that the transfer of approximately 30 Sqm and 110 Sqm of land within registered title of the Authority to the owners of Avalon & Woodside respectively be endorsed.

15. Newport Parrog Undergrounding Scheme

Members were reminded that, encouraged by the success of its power line undergrounding initiative during the period 2010-15, Western Power Distribution (WPD) had extended the scheme into their current business plan by allocating a further £1.3m to fund the undergrounding of those sections of their existing overhead electrical supply network which were considered the most damaging to the special qualities of four protected



landscapes – Gower and Wye Valley AONBs and Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire Coast National Parks.

The Authority had successfully delivered five landscape improvement schemes during the period 2010-15 while a further three schemes had already been secured under the current 2015-23 funding initiative.

The undergrounding of cables and relocation of poles had been an issue that had been outlined by the community in the Newport Parrog Conservation Area Proposals Document as they were considered to have a significant detrimental visual impact on the built environment. A scheme had now been identified by the Authority's officers, and endorsed by the Western Power Undergrounding Initiatives Panel working in conjunction with BT Openreach, to remove their respective existing overhead networks, and replace those same networks with underground connections. Subject to obtaining any necessary statutory/legal consents the work could be completed during the period 2018/19.

Unlike previous schemes where BT Openreach had voluntarily funded the full cost of their works, on this occasion their support was conditional upon the National Park contributing £14,000 towards the total BT Openreach costs which they had estimated to be in the order of £33,000. Officers were of the opinion that an externally funded WPD only scheme in this location (which would leave the existing overhead BT Openreach network in situ) would not achieve the required level of landscape gain. Officers clarified that the contribution could be met from existing budget allocations and would not rise if the cost of the scheme increased.

Members congratulated them on the number of schemes brought forward to date.

It was **RESOLVED** that the opinion of officers set out in the report and selection criteria paper be endorsed, and that their ongoing work towards securing the delivery of an undergrounding scheme at Newport Parrog to include a financial contribution by the Authority towards the scheme's cost in the sum of £14,000 be authorised.

16. Committee Membership

Members were reminded that, at the Annual General Meeting held on 14 June 2017, it was reported that consideration of the membership of the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee, Grievance Committee and Appeals Committee would be confirmed once the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Authority and other relevant Committees had been appointed.

The necessary appointments having taken place, the report set out a suggested composition for these Committees. Taking forward the



previous composition of the Committees, some vacancies had been identified and nominations for these were sought.

While some of the vacancies were filled, two remained, and it was agreed that details of these be circulated to those Members of the Authority who were not present at the meeting that day.

It was **RESOLVED** that the composition of the under-mentioned Committees be confirmed as follows, subject to an email being sent to those Members not present to seek nominations for the remaining vacancies.

Investigating and Disciplinary Committee

Mrs G Hayward, Chair, National Park Authority

Mr A Archer, Deputy Chair, Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee

Councillor M James

Councillor A Wilcox

Councillor Vacancy

Grievance Committee

Councillor M Williams, Chair, Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee

Ms C Gwyther

Dr R Heath-Davies

Councillor PJ Morgan

Councillor D Clements

Appeals Committee

Mr AE Sangster, Deputy Chair, National Park Authority

Councillor R Owens, Chair, Development Management Committee

Councillor P Harries

Mrs J James

Councillor Vacancy

17. Monitoring Officer

It was reported that the Authority's current Monitoring Officer had indicated that he wished to retire at the end of November 2017. The report before Members set out the options for appointment of a replacement Monitoring Officer and also recommended additions to the existing person specification for the post to include the duties of Data Protection Officer under the forthcoming General Data Protection Regulation and that Welsh language skills be considered essential for the post.

While the appointment of an 'arm's length' Monitoring Officer was commended, some Members suggested that a job share with



Pembrokeshire County Council could be another option. Officers advised that they would make the County Council aware of the opportunity when it was advertised. There was also some discussion regarding the need for Welsh language skills to be essential, whereas the current Monitoring Officer stated that he had found the ability to speak Welsh extremely beneficial during his time in the post.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) Commencement of the recruitment process for the post of an independent, 'arm's-length' Monitoring Officer be agreed, with a view to an appropriately qualified person being in post on the 1st December 2017;
- b) The Personnel Committee be recommended to amend the person specification for the post to include:
 - (i) the duties of Data Protection Officer under the forthcoming General Data Protection Regulation, and
 - (ii) that Welsh language skills be considered essential for the post, and
- c) The interview(s) for the post of Monitoring Officer be delegated to the Personnel Committee, and that a recommendation for appointment be subsequently presented to the National Park Authority for ratification.

18. Forthcoming Events

The Chief Executive informed Members that the Authority would be hosting an event at the County Show on Wednesday 16 August at 10am. Any Members who were at the Show that day were welcome to attend. He also reminded them that a Workshop had been arranged for Wednesday 13th September when the Health Board would provide information on two consultations which they were undertaking. Further details would be provided in due course.

NOTED.

