

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

27 September 2017

Present: Mrs G Hayward (Chair)

Mr A Archer, Councillor P Baker, Councillor Mrs D Clements, Councillor K Doolin, Mrs J James, Councillor M James, Councillor P Kidney, Councillor PJ Morgan, Councillor R Owens, Mr AE Sangster, Councillor A Wilcox, Councillor M Williams and Councillor S Yelland

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10.00am – 11.30am and
11.45am - 1.10pm)

1. Personal

The Chairman informed the Committee of the recent sad death of Mr Phil Bennett. Mr Bennett had worked for the National Park Authority for many years and had retired from his post as Cultural Heritage Manager in August 2016. Everyone present stood in a minute's silence to remember him.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Evans, Ms C Gwyther, Councillor P Harries and Dr R Heath-Davies,

3. Disclosures

There were no disclosures of interest.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 9 August were presented for confirmation and signature.

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

4. Matters arising

(a) Committee Membership (Minutes 16)

The remaining vacancies had been filled, with Councillor P Kidney offering to sit on the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee and Councillor K Doolin offering to sit on the Appeals Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the above mentioned appointments be approved.

(b) Appointment of Monitoring Officer (Minute 17)

The Chief Executive advised that the advertisement had been placed with a closing date for applications of 4 October 2017. Pembrokeshire County Council had also been made aware of the vacancy.



NOTED.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair announced that she had undertaken the following engagements on behalf of the Authority:

- Attendance at various events on the three days of the County Show, including hosting the Minister, Lesley Griffiths, who received presentations on the Pathways and Invasive Non Native Species Projects. She was also presented with the latest in the series of framed posters published by the Authority which featured St Nons Chapel. The Chair also noted that the Authority had won second prize for the Best Stand in the show and thanked staff for their work in achieving this.
- Greeting several cruise ships visiting Fishguard, in conjunction with the County Council and Fishguard Chamber of Trade. It was hoped that these would bring economic benefit to the National Park.
- Attendance at an Army Engagement Reception which invited participation in the Army Covenant which aimed to find ways to help people who have left the armed forces with training and employment.
- Attendance at a dinner with the Equality and Human Rights Commission at which the implementation of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act was discussed, including the Authority's Pathways project.

6. Development Management Committee – Report of Meeting

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the meeting of the Development Management Committee held on 9 August 2017 be received.

7. 2017 Annual Monitoring Report on the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan

The Head of Park Direction reminded Members that the Annual Monitoring Report was produced by the Authority each year, looking back at the previous financial year from 1 April to 31 March, and assessed the extent to which the Local Development Plan (LDP) strategy and policies were being achieved. Attention was drawn to the key findings at the beginning of the document which set out where issues had arisen and what further action was required. These would continue to be addressed as part of the LDP revision.

It was noted that the report would be subject to public consultation and any feedback would be reported to Members when the next annual report was considered.

One Member drew attention to several references in the report to an inconsistent approach by Natural Resources Wales with regard to development in a floodplain. The officer noted that the issue had been



raised with both Welsh Government and other members of the Planning Officers Society for Wales and would be followed up. Another Member asked, with regard to the quality of inland and coastal waters, when a decision might be taken on designation of a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone in Pembrokeshire. The Chief Executive advised that he understood a decision by Welsh Government had been delayed and might now be made at the end of the year.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Monitoring Report for the Local Development Plan be approved for submission to Welsh Government by the 31st October 2017.

8. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Local Development Plan Annual Performance Report 2016/17

Members were reminded that the Annual Planning Performance Report was produced by the Authority each year for submission to Welsh Government by 31 October. The report set out the Authority's performance against service standards set out in the Welsh Government's Planning Performance Framework. The Welsh Government published annually a report summarising the findings of local planning authorities' Annual Performance Reports.

The Authority was generally performing well, with only a few areas of concern, however officers believed these could be addressed.

Thanking them for a helpful report, one Member drew attention to the partial meeting of the measure regarding an online register of planning applications. Officers advised that order had been placed for a Document Management System which would address this issue and it had been hoped this would be available in October, however there had been a delay due to technical issues. She was confident that these would be resolved in the next few months.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Annual Planning Performance Report 2016/17 be approved for submission to Welsh Government by the 31st October 2017.

9. Newport Tourist Information Centre

It was reported that the way in which the Authority delivered its visitor related services had been changing over a number of years and at the meeting of the National Park Authority in September 2016 it had been agreed that its approach should move away from a traditional 'visitor centre' model of service delivery in order to invest in a package of new initiatives in partnership with the tourism trade and local community. For the benefit of new Members, the Director of Delivery and Discovery summarised the process that had been undertaken to date. This had led to the submission of two formal, community-led options for the Centre at



Newport and these were outlined in detail in the report. In summary they were as follows:

- 1) An expression of interest by the Newport Visitor Centre Action Group to work with PCNPA and the Newport Library Working Group to share space within the existing Tourist Information Centre (TIC) building and to provide volunteer support to PCNPA to help reduce running costs.
- 2) An expression of interest by Newport Town Council to lease the TIC building at a peppercorn rent and to work with PCNPA and the Newport Library Working Group, as joint tenants of the building, to deliver a range of visitor and community services 'under one roof'.

However as neither option fully supported the stated aim of Members to change the way information services were delivered a third proposal had been put forward by officers. This option recommended that the Authority works in partnership with Pembrokeshire County Council, Newport Town Council and the Newport Library Working Group to deliver a joint library and tourism service at the existing library premises in Bridge Street in Newport. For the reasons set out in the report, it was recommended that this third option be approved and that the public facing elements of the Newport TIC be closed by no later than the 28 February 2018.

The Chair firstly thanked the Newport community for the emails and communications she had received and also acknowledged receipt of a copy of the online petition from Newport and district which contained 1400 signatures.

Members expressed disappointment that the Newport community had not been able to produce a single, unified response to the consultation which could have produced a potential way forward. There was some concern expressed about the future of the building and whether it could be used by the community in the future, however officers believed that such discussions were premature as the decision before Members was regarding the future provision of a visitor centre by the Authority in Newport. If the recommendation was approved, the building would be deemed 'surplus to requirements, in line with the Authority's asset management policy, and a paper for the future disposal of the building could be presented by officers at a future meeting of the Authority.

Considering the potential to work with the community under option 3, officers confirmed that the Authority was happy to work with any community in terms of providing training and supplying information to visitors and residents. It was suggested that it might be possible to support staff at a joint facility, such as the current library in Bridge St in Newport by providing expertise though staff or volunteers to help deliver a tourism service to the town. It was anticipated that if a decision was



taken to pursue Option 3, then, with local goodwill, new arrangements could potentially be put in place in time for the 2018 season.

It was noted that although there were several groups in Newport, the Town Council was the elected body and some Members considered that their submission (option 2) would provide the best way forward, provided that the Community could work together to achieve it. This was moved and seconded. The Authority's Section 151 Officer drew Members' attention to page 102 of the report which set out the possible financial implications of approving option 2 which could limit the Authority's options in the future. Officers therefore suggested that if Members were minded to vote for option 2 that these risks be fully explored before any discussions regarding the community purchase or lease of the building be entered into.

However other Members re-iterated the fact that delivery of tourism services was changing across the country and felt that the decision taken by the Authority last year should be taken forward by supporting option 3 which still allowed for the Authority to work in partnership with the community to deliver services jointly at the currently library premises in Bridge Street. The strength of opinion and views expressed by the community were an asset in this respect. This amendment was also moved and seconded.

A vote was then taken on the amendment (to approve option 3) and this vote was won. The amendment then became the substantive motion and a vote was taken on it, this also being won.

It was **RESOLVED** that Option 3 as detailed in the report be approved, with closure of the public facing elements of the Newport Tourist Information Centre (TIC) by no later than the 28th February 2018.

The meeting then adjourned for a short comfort break.

10. Carew Castle Walled Garden Development Proposals

The Visitor Services Manager, South Pembrokeshire explained that following completion of major grant funded works at the Castle in 2013, which included the construction of a new Visitor Centre within the Walled Garden, proposals to complete its redevelopment had been approved but had yet to secure funding. The proposals included a café, landscaping, planting, adventure play area, undercover tented structure, new schools store and entrance, development of a 'Night Garden' for Dark Sky Discovery and new interpretation.

A Tourism Amenity Investment Support (TAIS) grant application had been submitted to Visit Wales which would cover 80% of the Walled Garden improvements, but specifically excluded development of a café. Match



funding of £30,000 for the project had already been approved in the 2018/18 capital budget. A decision on this grant was due on 29 September 2017.

Approval was therefore being sought for capital expenditure from the Authority's reserves to construct a café at Carew, within the walled Garden at a cost of c£84,175. In addition, if the current grant application was turned down, approval was also sought for capital expenditure of a further c£146,950 from reserves for completion of the Walled Garden proposals set out above, giving a total project cost of c£231,125.

In terms of a timescale, it was intended that the café would be open for the end of March 2018, with work on the Walled Garden being undertaken the following winter for completion by Spring 2019. It was proposed to run the café in-house as staff at the Castle already had experience in doing this. A business plan was appended to the report and this anticipated a 6-year return on investment.

Members considered this to be an interesting and imaginative scheme, which made good use of the Authority's capital receipts. However there was some concern regarding the proposed in-house catering given the difficulties experienced with this in the initial years at Oriel y Parc. There were also some questions regarding what some Members considered to be over optimistic pricing. Officers explained that they had looked at the franchise arrangements currently operating at Oriel y Parc and Castell Henllys and had felt that given the skills and experience of the team a greater return could be achieved by running the café themselves; however the budget would be carefully monitored. With regard to menus and pricing, this could be looked at again, but research had shown that they compared favourably to other outlets in the vicinity.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) funding of £84,175 for the café at Carew be approved; and
- b) if the Authority was unsuccessful in securing the Visit Wales grant that funding for the entire project of £231,125 be approved.

11. Carew Mill & Causeway – Reservoirs Act Statutory Repairs

It was reported that Carew Mill and Causeway were Grade II* listed buildings. Various restorations had taken place to both structures since the Authority took the lease of the mill in 1983. Repairs to the causeway were necessary to prevent/minimise water leakage through the structure from the mill pond, which was designated as a high-risk reservoir as defined by the Reservoirs Act 1975 whereby an uncontrolled release of water from the reservoir could endanger life. It was the Authority's duty to appoint a Supervising Engineer and arrange for annual inspections to be carried out.



In August 2016 the Mill Pond, Causeway and Mill were inspected with the annual report issued in November 2016 and measures were recommended to be carried out within 1 year in the interests of safety. A summary of the work required was set out in the report before Members which was estimated to cost c£87,000 plus c£30,000 for fees and consents to give an estimated total contract of c£117,000. However it was also noted that continual deterioration in the structure would inevitably lead to more major repairs in the future.

Under the Authority's Standing Orders relating to Major Contracts (£25,000+), standing order 13 allowed for the suspension of the normal procurement rules under certain conditions. Due to the extremely tight timescale to complete the repairs before the end of November 2017, approval was also sought to apply standing order 13. It was proposed to contact three reputable contractors as recommended by the Authority's consultants in order to obtain three quotations for the works.

Members asked, given that the survey had been received in November 2016, why the report was only now being brought before the Authority. Officers replied that this was due to a combination of sickness absence, the need to identify the best means of carrying out the repairs and the need for work to be carried out outside of the main tourist season. The officer added that the cost for fees was high due to the technical nature of the repairs and that a contingency would be built in.

It was **RESOLVED** that approval be given for:

- a) Funding from the Authority's General Reserves for the repairs/works as set out in the report; and
- b) variation to the Authority's Standing Orders relating to Major Contracts in respect of contractor selection.

12. Sustainable Development Fund Annual Report 2016-17

Members were reminded that the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) provided support for innovative projects that demonstrated practical solutions for a more sustainable way of life. The Annual Report which was presented to Members provided information on progress of the SDF, including the Little Green Grant (a small grant scheme which was administered by Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services), for the period April 2016 to March 2017.

To summarise, the SDF had contributed £144,557 to support 19 projects. These projects had delivered outcomes in a number of key work areas that were important to the National Park and in achieving the Authority's Management Plan and Improvement Plan objectives. The funding had attracted £320,709 of match funding and contributed to projects with an overall value of £465,266.



The Chair thanked the officer for her report which she described as interesting and inspiring. Other Members commented on the excellent links the fund made with educational projects.

NOTED.

- 13. To consider whether the public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items due to the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 and 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972**
- One Member questioned whether the public should be excluded from the meeting for the second item, and therefore a separate vote was taken on each of the two items. The Monitoring Officer added that he was happy that, due to the potential impact on the contractual arrangements of staff, the public should be excluded during the discussions on this report.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) the public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of Report 46/17 Update on the Disposal of the Authority's Land Holding Known as National Park Caravan Site, Sageston due to the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.
 - b) the public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of Report 47/17 Discussions Regarding re-locating the Headquarters of PCNPA from Pembroke Dock to Haverfordwest due to the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 and 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.
- 14. Update on the Disposal of the Authority's Land Holding Known as National Park Caravan Site, Sageston**
- For the benefit of new Members of the Authority, the Chief Executive outlined the history of this site and the actions taken to date, as well as providing an update regarding the latest developments.

It was **RESOLVED** that the ongoing actions of officers to dispose of the above mentioned land at its market value no later than summer 2018 following a period of open marketing to be conducted by external Chartered Surveyors be endorsed.

- 15. Discussions regarding re-locating the Headquarters of PCNPA from Pembroke Dock to Haverfordwest**
- For the benefit of new Members of the Authority, the Chief Executive outlined the process which had led to these discussions taking place, however he stressed that at present there was no proposal under consideration.



In view of the fact that some Members had expressed concern about the discussions and the fact that there were seven new Members on the Authority since the issue had been discussed, the Chief Executive felt it appropriate to ask the views of Members on whether they wished the Authority to continue to discuss a proposal to re-locate with the County Council.

Members debated whether such discussions should continue, and expressed their confidence in the way the Chief Executive had approached this issue. The first proposal put was that discussions with PCC regarding relocation of the Authority's Headquarters should be terminated. An amendment was then tabled that discussions continue, but that PCC be given two months in which to come up with a proposal for the Authority to consider. A vote was taken on the amendment and this was lost. A vote was then taken on the substantive motion that discussions should be terminated and this was won. It was agreed, however, that any discussions regarding joint working should continue.

It was **RESOLVED** that discussions with Pembrokeshire County Council on proposals to relocate its office from Pembroke Dock to Haverfordwest should be terminated.

