

## OPERATIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

5 July 2017

Present: Mr A Archer (Substitute for Mrs J James), Councillor K Doolin, Ms C Gwyther, Councillor P Harries, Councillor PJ Morgan, Mr AE Sangster and Councillor S Yelland

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 12.30pm – 2.15pm)

### 1. Appointment of Chair

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor K Doolin be appointed Chair for the forthcoming year.

### 2. Appointment of Deputy Chair

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor S Yelland be appointed Deputy Chair for the forthcoming year.

### 3. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs J James, Councillor ML Evans and Councillor A Wilcox.

### 4. Disclosures

There were no disclosures of interest.

### 5. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 22 March 2017 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2017 be confirmed and signed.

### 6. Carew Castle and Tidal Mill

The Visitor Services Manager South provided the Committee with an overview of the site at Carew including its conservation value, the services provided, visitor numbers and income, recent and future developments as well a future priorities.

Thanking her for her presentation, Members began by asking about merchandise to support the site as a Dark Sky Discovery Site. The Manager replied that to date there had not been any demand for such products, however she would shortly be carrying out a review of National Park branded merchandise across all the National Park sites and would give further consideration to this, a developing sector.

The Committee expressed support for the provision of a café at the site and asked about likely costs, income and therefore the payback period. The Manager provided some estimated figures and explained that a business plan would be drawn up in the coming months, with the hope that the café would be open next season. She added that the lack of catering facilities at the site,



together with insufficient car parking, were two of the greatest challenges experienced by the site. Structural problems with the Millpond Causeway would be covered by the Building Projects Officer in his report to the Committee (Minute 8 refers). There were also challenges associated with the current lease.

**NOTED.**

#### **7. Skills in Action Traineeship – Project Review**

The Discovery Team Leader explained that Skills in Action was a three year project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund which provided 12 annual placements each year across Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (NPA), Pembrokeshire Coast NPA and Torfaen County Borough Council. Central to the traineeship was the attainment of a Level 2 City and Guilds qualification in conservation management combined with the opportunity to learn new skills and acquire knowledge through working with National Park estate/conservation management teams. The project would come to an end in August.

The Committee was then shown a film which demonstrated some of the work undertaken by the Trainees and this was followed by contributions from one of the Wardens involved in their day to day supervision, a past and present trainee and from the National Trust's North Pembrokeshire Coastal Activity Ranger with whom the trainees had done some work. All the feedback was positive, with great pride in what the trainees had achieved. An added bonus had been an increase in partnership working.

The Skills in Action Coordinator provide an update on what had happened to the trainees and of the 15 working with PCNPA, 12 were in Higher Education or employment, 11 of these in the countryside sector and 3 in the National Park. An external evaluation of the scheme would be undertaken at the end of the three year period, however individually the trainees had felt that it had been of great value and had helped them to gain employment. An added benefit had been the upskilling of the Wardens who had undertaken higher level health and safety or adult education training so that they could help trainees learn in the workplace.

Officers added that unfortunately a further bid to extend the project had been unsuccessful, although they would be looking into other schemes such as the Apprenticeship Levy. Next year there was sufficient funding for 3 trainees for a six month period.

**NOTED.**

#### **8. The Maintenance of National Park Authority Buildings – Annual Report 2016/17**

The report of the Building Projects Officer provided an overview of the maintenance of the Authority's buildings, including the Building Maintenance Annual Report 2016/17 which was appended to the report. It was noted that a replacement Appendix had been sent to Members. The Authority had 49 buildings/structures, not including car parks or land holdings, held on either a



freehold or leasehold basis. There was a huge variety in age, type and significance and the overriding aim was to ensure all were fit for purpose. Work was both proactive and reactive with the annual maintenance budget of £90-100k; however as the cost of all identified works was often in the region of £250,000 prioritisation was necessary and capital or external funding had to be sought.

In addition to the physical maintenance, it was also considered prudent to ensure that the buildings were as 'green' as possible. Significant carbon savings had been made as a result of reducing energy use.

Members asked about the major maintenance issues at Carew Causeway and were advised that leaks in the structure were monitored on a weekly basis and reported to the reservoir engineers appointed by the Authority who had been employed to come up with options and costs (this was a statutory requirement under The Reservoirs Act 1975). The Chief Executive added that maintenance of the causeway was part of the lease.

**NOTED.**

#### **9. Pwyth mewn Pryd – Stitch in Time Project Update**

The Committee was reminded that the above project, which was initially supported by the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), sought to undertake control on a whole-catchment basis of three priority invasive non-native species – Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and *Rhododendron ponticum* - focused on the Gwaun Valley.

A presentation was made on progress since the SDF phase of the project had been completed in 2016 as the Authority had funded a 15 month extension to maintain project continuity while external funding bids were prepared. The project received a further £100,000 from Welsh Government in April 2017.

As part of the project extension, a desktop ecosystems services assessment of the SDF phase of the project was undertaken, and a copy of this was appended to the report.

Members were pleased to see the impact of the project with the resultant increase in biodiversity. They asked if there contact details were available for the public if they came across Japanese knotweed, and the project coordinator advised that several signs had been erected showing a contact number and word had also spread around the community. An added benefit of the project had been improved partnership working in this area with Pembrokeshire County Council and Natural Resources Wales.

**NOTED.**

#### **10. Performance Report for the Period ending 31 May 2017**

It was reported that the performance report had been modified to follow the structure of the Corporate Plan for 2016-17, which itself followed the approach of the Well-being of Future Generations Act with seven well-being objectives



and an additional section providing general governance information. A number of new measures had been introduced to reflect actions within the Corporate and Resources Plan 2017/18.

The report presented the performance to 31 May, and work had commenced on the majority of actions. However where data was collected quarterly, statistics would not be available until the end of July and would therefore be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

Additional information had been included at the end of the report clarifying planning enforcement statistics for 2016/17 following a question raised at the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee. Officers had now reviewed the data and how it was presented and it would in future be collated and presented in line with the statutory indicators for enforcement cases investigated and enforcement action taken.

With regard to enforcement, one Member noted that the reason given for low performance was one of the officers being on maternity leave and asked whether consideration had been given to employing a replacement. He was advised that there had been difficulties in recruitment, however a planning officer had covered part of the post with the shortfall made up through consultancy.

One Member was also pleased to see the action regarding advocacy relating to the 3<sup>rd</sup> purpose of the National Park being recognised in legislation, and asked for an update on progress. The Chief Executive replied that the Future Landscapes Wales Working Group continued to meet and the issue would also be raised at the meeting with the Minister which would take place in the coming months.

It was resolved that the Performance Report be **RECEIVED**.

## **11. Risk Register**

The Finance Manager reported that the risk register had been reviewed by both the Management and Leadership Teams and recent progress and changes noted. Significant changes in risks were outlined in the report, and the full register appended for Members' consideration. There were two significant changes in risks – a report from Reservoirs Inspectors on the state of Carew Mill causeway wall suggesting that major repairs were due within the next twelve months and notification by Coed Cymru of their decision to withdraw from negotiations on the Cilrhedyn site.

Members asked whether there were any further plans for the Cilrhedyn site and whether Coed Cymru were likely to come back with a different proposal in future. Officers replied that a report would be brought back to the Authority in the next six to twelve months, however there had been significant reductions in the Centre's running costs and the site was currently being used as a Warden base. While officers were not aware of any plans by Coed Cymru, they were a natural partner in the site and some of their staff were now located there.



A question was also asked regarding the lease of the now closed Tenby Visitor Centre. Officers replied that discussions were ongoing, however a seasonal ranger had been employed in the Tenby area as part of plans to deliver services differently and was doing fantastic work.

**NOTED.**

**12. Forward Work Programme**

The Chief Executive suggested that future meetings of the Committee would consider reports outlining the work of the Authority's Centres, conservation and discovery teams, however this was an opportunity for Members to suggest any areas on which they would like more in depth information. Members said that all the presentations they had received were informative and provided an interesting insight into the work of the Authority.

[Councillor S Yelland tendered his apologies and left the meeting at this juncture.]

**13. 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.

