

OPERATIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

26 September 2018

Present: Councillor K Doolin (Chair)
Mr A Archer, Councillor ML Evans, Councillor P Harries, Dr RM Plummer, Councillor PJ Morgan, Mr AE Sangster, Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor S Yelland.

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 11.20am – 13.40pm)

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. Apology

An apology for absence was received from Mrs J James. It was noted that Mr A Archer was acting as substitute for her at the meeting.

4. Disclosures

There were no disclosures of interest.

5. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 13 June 2018 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2018 be confirmed and signed.

6. Discovery Team – Pathways Project-Review after 1 Year Delivery

Discovery Team Officers presented an update on the work of the Pathways Project which was 1 year into a 3 year scheme. There were two main work areas: providing supported practical volunteering sessions for individuals and developing the capacity of other organisations to access the benefits that regular use of the outdoors offered their clients. The focus was on getting people outdoors, physical health, mental wellbeing and personal development, rather than on the value of the volunteer work undertaken.

It was reported that the project was working well, with a good mix of people who all worked to support each other as well as developing links between groups who may not have used the National Park in the past. Individual case studies were presented to Members. Officers stated that



they would be adapting the project to develop more recruitment of volunteers, increase wildlife/biodiversity recording, web walk surveying and work with other outdoor organisations and charities.

Members were impressed with what had been achieved in the past 12 months together with the efforts in collecting feedback which demonstrated how the project had progressed. It was felt that the use of the case studies was inspirational. Members asked about the geographical spread and gender mix of volunteers and what was being done to involve more women in the project. It was reported that the team were aware that the mix was not what they would like but they now had 2 volunteer female leaders and this would be built upon. Members felt that women may feel more comfortable in a female group and suggested that a focus on wildlife/biodiversity in these groups could be helpful. Whilst Welsh Language provision had not been demanded by participants it was felt that future development of this area would be useful. Members thought that reaching out to organisations via email would be cost effective and may reap rewards. It was also suggested that a SROI (Social Return on Investment) may want to be considered at the end of the Project.

NOTED

[Councillor M Evans tendered his apologies and left the meeting at this juncture.]

7. Planning Enforcement

The report of the Development Management Team Leader set out planning enforcement performance and proactive enforcement work taking place within the Authority. It was reported that whilst the figures did not compare favourably to the other Welsh National Parks, with the appointment of a new Enforcement Officer significant progress had been made in clearing the backlog. There were currently 6 cases potentially going to court with Members being updated on these in due course. An Officer had also worked one day a week for 20 weeks to monitor Camping and Caravanning sites and a new leaflet had been produced regarding the 28 day rule for campsites which had been given out to landowners and when complaints had been received. Building on the success of this, a similar project was proposed focussing on holiday lets and agricultural 'tied' properties. Enforcement Officers had also been attending courses and conferences and information sharing with officers at Pembrokeshire County Council and across Wales.

Members felt this was a useful report and that strides had been taken in reducing the backlog, but would like to see how things were progressing in six months. Officers replied that they were confident that most long standing cases would have been dealt with by the end of the financial



year. Members felt that the level of fines was not a sufficient deterrent and wanted to know if the Proceeds of Crime Act could be used, as much more money was being made during the breach than the potential fine. They also wanted to know what, if any direct action could be taken to stop breaches. Members requested that their appreciation was fed back to the enforcement team on the progress made.

The Director of Park Direction & Planning then made a brief presentation on other pressures facing the service including two difficult and long standing cases regarding car parking at Abereddy and Rhosson, and a High Court challenge against the Authority. She noted that all of these took time to resolve.

NOTED

[Councillor A Wilcox tendered his apologies and left the meeting at this juncture.]

8. Performance Report for the Period ending 31 July 2018

The Officer presented the Performance Report for the period ending 31 July 2018. This highlighted a number of points regarding Planning, replacement of the website, public rights of way, performance at the Centres and volunteering.

Members were concerned that the Authority did not have the right and sufficient IT competence and that its digital projects were behind curve. The CEO replied that Officers would be looking again at IT provision within the Authority. They also noted the reduction in the number of invoices paid on time. Officers replied that it was hoped this was a short term problem caused by a number of staff changes in the finance team. Members were also interested to know how the Tearoom at Carew was performing and it was noted that it was currently an operational success and more specific figures would be reported in due course.

NOTED

9. Risk Register

The Risk Register was appended for Members consideration. There had been a few minor changes including the funding settlement for the medium and long term risk having changed from red to amber. It was noted that the latest internal audit was looking at risk management and this would result in changes to the register.

Regarding risks 21 & 28 Members asked if a restore on back up recovery was tested and officers replied that they believed so. Regarding risk 13 one Member expressed concern with the stated mitigation, believing that the Authority had considerable influence. Officers agreed to clarify the



wording. Finally, there was concern that there was a risk of failure with regards to Sustainable Development Fund money (risk 16) especially as the new SDF Officer had now left. It was pointed out that here was no significant money left in the fund to be allocated with impacts being short term and that all options would be considered regarding its future.

NOTED

10. Presentation by the Operations Manager on the Digital Park Project

The Operation Manager outlined the work of his team and explained that he was planning to purchase a new system called ESRI Arc which was an American owned industry leader company with a base in the UK. This would replace the current paper based method of working with the advantages being better job planning and the ability to prioritize work. It was hoped that this would free up Warden Managers for more public engagement. This system was very easy to use with little IT support required and the ability to develop apps to record all kinds of information. It was hoped that this system would encourage more feedback regarding reporting problems from the general public via a link on the new website. A process was already in place to check trees and bridges in the Park and the Officer believed that digitizing the system would make it more robust giving the ability to predict any problems and react quickly.

Members wanted to know why it had taken so long to bring the system forward and how much it would cost/save the Authority. The Operations Manager reported that the past 6/8 months had been spent collecting the data needed. It was expected that the cost would be £15,000 per annum for up to 30 licenses and a report detailing the cost and options was to be presented to the NPA meeting in October. Members could see considerable advantages in introduction of the system particularly in monitoring things such as tree safety.

NOTED

11. Items for Future Meetings

The Chief Executive suggested that future items for consideration by the Committee could include a review of the Summer Rangers, an annual report on public path creation orders and the Wales Coast Path promotional strategy; he asked if there were any other topics on which Members would like to receive reports.

Members felt that presentations such as those they had just received were very useful. Some Members after attending the recent Europarc Conference felt that the Committee could be used as a means of supporting and monitoring the Youth Manifesto and would like to take this forward as a continuing agenda item. Members also asked about the Authority's relationship with the marine environment, how it interacted



with various agencies and what input it had in terms of conservation along the ribbon of the coast. The CEO reported that the marine area was not within the National Park so in a performance review context it was difficult to present. However work was ongoing in this area and he would include the item on a future agenda.

NOTED

12. 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.

