

# NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

29 November 2017

Present: Mrs G Hayward (Chair)

Mr A Archer, Councillor P Baker, Councillor Mrs D Clements, Ms C Gwyther, Councillor P Harries, Dr R Heath-Davies, 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 – 12.30pm)

## 1. Personal

The Chair announced that today would be last National Park Authority meeting for Ms Chris Gwyther whose term of office finished on 1 January 2018. She reminded Members that Ms Gwyther had been a Member of the Authority since January 2008 and highlighted her commitment both to the National Park and the wellbeing of the people of Pembrokeshire. Her voice would be missed in future meetings and she wished her well for the future. Thanking her for her kind words, Ms Gwyther replied that she had seen the Authority come through some difficult times and would always remain its friend.

The Chair noted that it was also the last day for the Monitoring Officer, Mr John Parsons, as he was retiring. She thanked him for providing clear, balanced and wise counsel, dispensed with wit and great humour. She knew that Members would miss his sound advice and would like to wish him a long and happy retirement.

The Monitoring Officer thanked Members both past and present for the way in which they served the Authority, and hoped that for the delivery of good governance, the high standards they had set would be maintained in the future. The fact that no Member had been found guilty by the Ombudsman since he became Monitoring Officer was a tribute to them all. He also wished to thank officers who served both the local and national interest so well, and expressed his gratitude particularly to the Democratic Services Team for all their support.

Finally the Chair welcomed Mr Nick Selwyn and Mr Steve Frank from the Wales Audit Office who would be presenting the Annual Improvement Report later in the meeting.

**NOTED.**



## 2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K Doolin, Councillor M Evans and Mrs J James.

## 3. Disclosures

Councillor P Harries disclosed an interest in the report on the disposal of the Authority's premises at Long Street, Newport, however he advised that he had obtained a dispensation from the Authority's Standards Committee to speak and vote on matters pertaining to it.

## 4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 27 September 2017 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2017 be confirmed and signed.

## 4. Matters arising

### (a) Carew Castle Walled Garden Development Proposals (Minutes 10)

The Chief Executive reported that the Authority had been successful in securing the Visit Wales Grant for the project to complete the Walled Garden at Carew and therefore the sum of money agreed at the meeting to cover that element of the work would not now need to be provided by the Authority.

**NOTED.**

### (b) Carew Mill and Causeway – Reservoirs Act Statutory Repairs

Work was about to commence on the Causeway, however both tenders submitted for the work were above what had been budgeted for, although it was noted that the price of the work had been negotiated downward. Funding for the project would still be covered from the Authority's reserves.

**NOTED.**

## 5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair announced that she had attended the following events, as well as other engagements, on behalf of the Authority:

- National Parks Wales Members' Seminar 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> October in Brecon
- National Parks UK AGM and Conference between 24 and 27 October at the South Downs
- Meeting with Minister for Environment, Hannah Blythyn AM, together with representative from the other Welsh National Park Authorities



The Seminar and Conference had both been interesting, discussing ideas that could be taken forward in the Authority's own context. With regard to the meeting with the Minister, who had only recently been appointed, the budget news was not good as the Authority would receive a 5% cut for both 18/19 and 19/20 financial years. The Chief Executive added that a budget workshop would take place for Members on 13 December.

## **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 20 September 2017;
- (ii) Operational Review Committee held on 6 September 2017;
- (iii) Sustainable Development Fund Committee held on 11 October 2017;
- (iv) Personnel Committee held on 11 October 2017.

## **7. Wales Audit Office – Annual Improvement Report 2016-17**

The Chief Executive reported that, under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, the Auditor General for Wales was required to report the audit and assessment work in relation to whether the Authority had discharged its duties and met the requirements of the Measure. As part of its work, a baseline review of governance had also been undertaken across the three Welsh National Park Authorities, and a copy of the letter outlining the process and findings of this review was also included for Members.

Mr Selwyn from the Audit Office was then invited to present his report. This outlined the four pieces of work that had been undertaken during the course of the year and concluded that that the Authority had met its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement and had complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources with an unqualified audit opinion having been issued.

With regard to the Governance Review, Mr Franks reported that this was the first in a series of reviews undertaken in the context of the Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) Act. The review had focussed on governance culture, examining attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours and had involved surveys being sent to Authority Members and staff with follow up workshops having also been held. The collated responses had allowed benchmarking across the three Authorities and had been very positive. Two proposals for improvement had been identified, as set out in the report and these had both been taken forward.

Members agreed that the governance review workshop which they had attended had been worthwhile and suggested that the themes, issues and proposals for improvement raised could be discussed further at a workshop. The question was also asked regarding audit fees, which the



report stated were 'broadly in line' with what had been agreed. Mr Selwyn replied that the fee had been about the same as the previous year, having been reduced by £53; this reflected the cost of delivery. Future work would continue to focus on the requirements of WFG Act rather than on process. The Chief Executive added that legislative change was needed to align the audit work with the WFG Act and the Local Government measure.

The Chair also noted that the Authority's incorrect title had been used throughout the Audit Office report.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Improvement Report be received and noted.

**8. Certificate of Compliance for the Audit of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority's Assessment of 2016-17 Performance**

It was reported that the Wales Audit Office was required, under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to give an opinion on whether the Authority had discharged its duties in respect of improvement reporting and met the requirements of the Measure.

The Auditor General for Wales had recently given his opinion that the Authority had discharged its duties.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Improvement Assessment Letter be received and noted.

**9. Consultation on Pembrokeshire Well-being Plan and Implications of Objectives and Work Streams on the Authority's Activities**

Members were reminded that the Public Service Board was required to produce a Well-being Plan which set out how it would improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Pembrokeshire. The draft Plan had been published for consultation and Members' views on it, together with its implications for the work of the Authority, were sought. It was also noted that Members could respond directly to the consultation and details of how they could do this were provided.

Members commended the draft Plan, which they described as vibrant and easy to read, reflecting what was happening in the county. They also acknowledged the importance of the document in setting a framework for the work of the Authority and asked that any changes to the Plan resulting from comments made by other bodies be brought to their attention.

The Chief Executive added that having been involved in its preparation, the Authority would not be responding to the consultation. It was hoped



that the final Plan would be brought to the March meeting of the Authority for agreement.

**NOTED.**

**10. Update on the Disposal of the Authority's Premises at Long Street, Newport**

Members were reminded of the decision at the meeting of the National Park Authority on 27 September 2017 to close the public facing element of the Authority's operation at its premises in Long Street Newport, and that this action be completed by 28 February 2018. They had been advised that this would result in the premises being declared surplus to the Authority's operational requirements and therefore disposed of on the open market in accordance with its Asset Management Policy.

It was reported that an initial written expression of interest had been received from Newport Town Council enquiring about their possible future use of the building for delivery of community facing services within the principle of Community Asset Transfer (CAT). In view of the fact that there might be other legal entities with competing aspirations for the premises via the principle of CAT, it was suggested that an open advert promoting the opportunity to all should be considered. It was noted that the guidance suggested that freehold disposal would rarely be prudent and that it was likely that some form of occupational lease drawn on full repairing and insuring terms would be most appropriate, although the details of this would depend on the Expression of Interest taken forward.

The Chair began by saying that she had been impressed by the large number of communications she and other Members had received from the people of Newport, which she felt reflected the vibrant nature of its community. She also stated that she had that morning received an updated version of a petition asking for the Visitor Centre to remain open.

Echoing the words of the Chair, and congratulating the community for their enthusiasm and support for maintaining a visitor centre in Newport, Members were also aware that while the community disagreed with the decision to close the centre, there was strong support for finding a realistic and pragmatic way forward through the CAT process suggested by Newport Town Council. There was therefore no hesitation in proposing the officer's recommendation going forward. Members were also reassured by the statement that a lease, rather than freehold disposal, was being considered.

One Member, however, remained concerned that the Authority would no longer have a presence in Newport and sought clarification of whether the building could, in fact, be disposed of, as she understood it had been given to the Authority. The Chief Executive explained that a building, not



the one currently used as a Visitor Centre, had been bequeathed to the Authority, however the bequest had been received on the basis that there were no conditions. With regard to the lack of a presence in the town, he added that the Authority remained happy to work with other organisations in the Newport and surrounding areas regarding the future provision of information.

Other Members sought clarification regarding the timescale of the process if the recommendation was agreed. Officers replied that this would depend on the Expressions of Interest received, however it was thought likely to take somewhere between six and nine months from advertisement through to documentation of a lease. It was clarified that the normal process for disposal of an asset was for bids to be sought, these would be considered by the Authority's Property and Project Group which would make a recommendation to the Authority's Leadership Team and in turn to the Authority for final decision.

It was **RESOLVED** that officers be authorised to proceed with the disposal of the Authority's legal interest in its property at Long Street, Newport in full accordance with the resolution dated 27 September 2017, with the caveat that the property's disposal on the open market should be preceded by a course of action to invite and give reasonable consideration to any viable Community Asset Transfer based proposals which the Authority receives, and that an update report is presented to the Authority for its approval prior to the granting of any new legal interest in the building.

#### **11. Undergrounding of Overhead Power Lines at Great Castle Head, St Ishmaels**

Members were reminded of the Authority's successful delivery of five landscape improvement schemes under Wester Power Distribution's (WPD) power line underground initiative, and of its success in securing several more under their current 2015/23 business plan. Details were provided of a further scheme at Great Castle Head which officers were now recommending due to its high quality sea/landscape and excellent accessibility.

The relevant property owners had given their in principle support and, subject to obtaining any necessary statutory/legal consent, it was anticipated that the work on site, which would be undertaken and funded by WPD, could be completed during 2018/19.

It was **RESOLVED** that the scheme to underground overhead power lines at Great Castle Head, St Ishmaels, as set out in the report be endorsed, and the ongoing work towards securing the delivery of the scheme as soon as reasonably practical be authorised.



## 12. Annual Review of the 2017 Operation and Management of the Authority's Car Parking Sites

The report provided Members with an update of the actions undertaken by officers over the course of the previous 12 months, including a summary of the Authority's car park operation during the 2017 charging season, and the outlining of priority objectives in advance of the 2018 and 2019 charging seasons.

Thanking officers for the report, one Member was disappointed with the net financial position due to a rise in operating costs, and asked whether this situation was likely to improve in the future. It was explained that the likely reason was under-investment in car parks in past years, and the figures were a more realistic reflection of operating costs. Other questions related to the use of Welsh, the cost of parking enforcement, the potential for card payment and the proposed increase in the daily rate for coach parking, this latter impacting entirely on visitors.

With regard to parking enforcement, Members were reminded that this was contracted out to Pembrokeshire County Council which had assured officers that the service to the Authority was provided on a cost recovery basis. It was noted that penalty notices were not revenue generating in themselves, but evidence did suggest that issuing them led to an increase in the number of parking tickets sold. The decision to increase the daily rate for coach parking from £3 to £8 had initially been taken in 2017 to more fairly reflect the space taken up by a coach in the car park when compared to a car. Coach parking spaces were available in the Oriel y Parc and Saundersfoot car parks and there had been no suggestion from operators that the increase would deter them visiting. It was also noted that the issue with provision of the service through the Welsh language had now been resolved. Work to allow the option for payment by card at the Authority's car parks was ongoing, but Members were reassured that all machines would continue to accept coins, and cashless payments would be an additional alternative.

It was **RESOLVED** that the ongoing actions of officers in readiness for the 2018 car parking season be endorsed and that work to proceed with the legal variation of the Car Park Order continue, with implementation of those same variations to be effective from the start of the 2019 car park charging season.

*[Councillor A Wilcox tendered his apologies and left the meeting at this juncture. Councillor R Owens was not present for the following two items (Minutes 13 and 14 refer).]*

## 13. Review of Porthgain Conservation Area Boundary

It was reported that the boundary of Porthgain Conservation Area had recently been reviewed and it was proposed that this be extended to the



west to include important industrial archaeology, as shown on the map appended to the report.

It was **RESOLVED** that Porthgain Conservation Area be amended as set out on the map, that the base data and annotation of the map be updated accordingly and that statutory notices be placed in the local press and London Gazette.

*[The Chair agreed to take the following item out of order as the Chief Executive had to leave the meeting.]*

#### **14. Update regarding appointment of a Monitoring Officer**

The Chief Executive reminded Members that, at the last meeting of the Authority, the task of recruiting a Monitoring Officer was delegated to the Personnel Committee. This was necessary as a result of the retirement of the current post holder. Unfortunately, following advertisement, no applications were received, and the Personnel Committee had subsequently met and agreed an approach going forward. One element of this was discussion with neighbouring authorities regarding the sharing of a Monitoring Officer. One authority had expressed an interest and a meeting to discuss this would take place in the next few weeks. Another aspect had been to look again at the job description and in doing so it had become apparent that many of the functions were already being carried out by the Administration and Democratic Services Manager. The Committee had therefore agreed to the appointment of a Deputy Monitoring Officer for a period of 12 months. The existing Monitoring Officer had also agreed to continue in his role in the interim until a permanent successor was appointed.

Members were happy with the decisions and congratulated the new Deputy Monitoring Officer on her appointment.

**NOTED.**

#### **15. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report 2018/19**

It was reported that the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales had recently published its draft Annual Report for 2018/19 and the key points of relevance were summarised, with the changes taking effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. Members' views were sought on whether a response to the report should be submitted to the Panel, and if so, the content of such a response.

It was **RESOLVED** that no response be submitted to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' draft Annual Report 2018/19.





## 16. Draft Welsh Language Strategy 2017-2022

Members were reminded that a draft Welsh Language Strategy, setting out, amongst other matters, how the Welsh language would be promoted and its use facilitated had been adopted for consultation purposes at the March meeting of the Authority. The Strategy had been amended in light of the comments received and a final draft document was presented to Members for consideration.

Thanking officers for the work undertaken on the draft Strategy since it had first been published, Members expressed their support for the document. However a concern was voiced regarding references to the difference in the number of Welsh speakers in the north and south of the county as there were Welsh speakers in every ward. Impact assessments of all documents were also necessary so that promotion was linked to policy. It was suggested that the Authority's role as an employer could also be highlighted, with statistics provided for the number of staff who currently spoke Welsh. Finally there was a request that more information be provided for visitors on Welsh pronunciation, particularly of place names, as this was something that was often of interest to them.

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft Welsh Language Strategy 2017-2022 be adopted and a set of SMART performance measures developed to evaluate the impact of the projects/initiatives contained therein on the objective of the overall strategy.