

## REPORT OF THE ACCESS & RIGHTS OF WAY MANAGER

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### SUBJECT: MEMBERSHIP OF THE PEMBROKESHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

#### Purpose of Report

To appoint a Member of the National Park Authority to serve on the Pembrokeshire Local Access Forum for the term 2019-2021.

#### Background

The Pembrokeshire Local Access Forum is a statutory body, established jointly by Pembrokeshire County Council and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (the appointing authorities) in June 2002, to provide advice on the improvement of public access to the countryside.

The statutory role and function of the Forum is to advise Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government as to the improvement of public access to the countryside for the purposes of open air recreation and enjoyment. The Forum meets in public on a quarterly basis and its membership is balanced to reflect the concerns of local farmers and land managers, as well as the interests of recreational users in the countryside. The Local Access Forum is therefore an important stakeholder group and plays a significant role in advising on key issues such as the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and Welsh Government proposals for legislative change in relation to countryside access and public rights of way.

In accordance with statutory regulations governing the establishment and administration of Local Access Forums, the appointing authorities are obliged to undertake a review of the membership of the Forum every three years from the date of its first meeting. In 2019 the Forum will move into its sixth term with the secretariat rotating to Pembrokeshire County Council. The County Council is therefore seeking nominations for suitable persons to be considered for membership of the Local Access Forum.

Regulations issued by the Welsh Government state that an 'appointing authority' must appoint one person to serve as a member of the Local Access Forum. That person can either be an officer or a Member of the National Park Authority.

The Access & Rights of Way Manager previously acted as the Secretary of the Local Access Forum during its term 2015-2018 and will continue to attend meetings in his professional capacity in order to brief members and consider the advice offered. Cllr Paul Harries has served as a member of the Local Access Forum on behalf of the National Park Authority in its capacity as appointing authority, during the term 2015-2018. Following the disbandment of the Forum in December 2018 there is now a need to appoint a Member of this Authority to serve on the next three year term of the Local Access Forum (2019-21).

## **Comparisons**

All local authorities and national park authorities in Wales are required to establish a Local Access Forum for their area.

## **Options**

The National Park Authority has a statutory obligation to establish a Forum, however, the legislation also provides for a Forum to be jointly established with the host local authorities in a national park. The National Park Authority could therefore establish its own Local Access Forum, separate from Pembrokeshire County Council but has taken the decision to work jointly with the County Council and share the administration for one Forum for the county of Pembrokeshire.

## **Financial considerations**

In addition to attending Forum meetings, the National Park Authority must also administer the Forum on a three year rotation. There is cost therefore in staff time but this is outweighed by the value of the Forum's work and the partnerships formed. Administration of the Forum also entails remuneration of Forum members' travel expenses and occasionally, venue hire for meetings that are not held at a local authority office.

## **Risk considerations**

Adequate resources in terms of staff to administer the Forum will always be a consideration in order to ensure that a Forum can function and that the National Park Authority meets its statutory obligations in this respect.

## **Compliance**

There is a statutory obligation under Section 94 of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 for the National Park Authority to establish a Forum. Also under the 2001 Regulations, there is an obligation for the Authority to appoint a member to serve on that body.

## **Human Rights/Equality issues**

Meetings are held in public and the appointing authorities ensure that there is representation by a wide variety of interests including disabled people.

## **Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal**

No issues.

## **Welsh Language statement**

No issues.

## **Recommendation**

**That a Member of the National Park Authority be appointed to serve on the Local Access Forum.**

### **Background documents to this report**

- *Local Access Forums Guidance (1) 2002 Countryside Council for Wales*
- *The Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001 Welsh Government*

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