

National Park Authority

3 November 2021

Present: Councillor P Harries (Chair)

Councillor P Baker BEM, Councillor Mrs D Clements, Councillor K Doolin, Councillor M Evans, Dr M Havard, Dr R Heath-Davies, Mrs S Hoss, Mrs J James, Councillor M James, Mr G Jones, Councillor PJ Morgan, Councillor R Owens, Dr R Plummer, Councillor A Wilcox and Councillor S Yelland.

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am – 11.25am; 11.35am –12.35pm)

1. Apologies

There were apologies for absence from Councillor P Kidney and Councillor M Williams.

2. Disclosures of Interest

Personal interests were disclosed by Dr M Havard and Councillor P Harries in respect of report 43/21 External Fundraising.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 15 September 2021 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 15 September be confirmed and authenticated.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

Noted.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair advised that since the last meeting he had attended a number of meetings/training events: Standards Training on 1st October; a Local Access Forum on 8 October; a Landscapes for Wales Seminar on 19th October; undertaking the Chief Executive's Performance Review on 21st October; an Audit Wales fieldwork meeting on 22nd October; various meetings to discuss proposed large scale projects in the National Park; a South Wales Corporate Joint Committee; and the launch of the Net Zero Wales plan. He had also visited Martin's Haven with the Relevant Authorities Group for the Special Area of Conservation; attended an event to mark Snowdonia's 70th Anniversary in Aberdyfi; and planted a commemorative elm tree at Oriel y Parc. The Chair, as Chair of National Parks Wales, had also written to the Minister, Julie James highlighting the work of National Parks to address climate change, in advance of the



COP26 summit. He went on to pass his congratulations to the Communications Team for receiving a gold award at the recent CIPR Cymru Wales PRide award for the Authority's Coast to Coast publication, and highlighted thanks/positive feedback received by the Authority in respect of the Ranger team for their work with the Pembrokeshire Family and Friends Days Out service, and also to those involved in the installation of electric vehicle charging points in the Authority's car parks. Finally last, but by no means least, the Chair reported that he had completed his walk of the coast path which had been postponed from 2020 and said that he had found this an inspiring and enlightening experience. He thanked all staff and Members who had supported him by accompanying him on different days.

Noted.

6. Reports of meetings of various Authority 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 8 September 2021 and 4 October 2021;
- (ii) Personnel Committee held on 15 September 2021;
- (iii) Operational Review Committee held on 22 September 2021;
- (iv) Member Support and Development Committee held on 6 October 2021; and
- (iv) Sustainable Development Fund Committee (SDF) held on 13 October 2021.

In respect of the minutes of the Member Support and Development Committee, the Chair of the Committee noted that the assessment of the Authority's application for Advanced Charter status would take place on 11 November, and those Members involved would be invited to a briefing beforehand.

Members also asked about the geographic boundary for applications to the SDF Committee and also the feedback offered when applications were unsuccessful. Officers and Members of the Committee advised that one of the criteria was that projects should be within, or serving those who lived within, the National Park, however one of the recent applicants had successfully run a project elsewhere and was now expanding it to schools in Pembrokeshire. Members were also reassured that feedback was provided to all those who were unsuccessful, with suggestions for what could be done before re-applying. It was also noted that the Fund was currently open to applications from community groups and they were encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity.



It was **resolved** that the minutes of the above mentioned Committees be adopted/received.

7. **Tree Planting Opportunity – Platinum Anniversary – 70 Years since Designation**

Members' attention was drawn to a letter from Councillor Reg Owens outlining a proposal to undertake a tree planting scheme in commemoration of the National Park's designation 70 years ago (1952). The scheme would involve planting 70 trees in each Park Community and officers had suggested that for practical reasons it would need to take place in the winter of 21/22, 22/23 and 23/24. It was noted that funding would need to be sought and some possible sources were identified in the report.

Councillor Owens thanked the Chief Executive for putting his suggestion before Members and noted that it was extremely timely, given the discussions that week at the COP26 Summit, and would demonstrate to Welsh Government and partner organisations that the Authority was committed to addressing global warming.

The Ranger Service Manager advised that her team were pleased to support Councillor Owens' suggestion, and believed that it would be embraced enthusiastically by communities. She explained that the report had suggested planting whips as these stood the best chance of surviving and thriving, however she acknowledged that it was important to be flexible and ensure that the right tree was selected for the chosen locations and therefore fruit or specimen trees may be more appropriate.

Members thanked Councillor Owens for his suggestion and were supportive of the proposal, which would be a positive way to celebrate the Authority's platinum anniversary. It was hoped that the work could be undertaken in collaboration with the Youth Rangers, Volunteer groups and other tree planting schemes within the county, including the Queen's Green Canopy programme, and it was suggested that schools could become involved in acorn collection and planting of the seedlings once established. A question was asked whether the trees could be planted on private land, as not all communities had public spaces which could be used for this purpose and the Biodiversity Officer advised that the Authority had experience of supporting work on private land for public benefit through the Conserving the Park scheme and agreed that this would be a good avenue to explore. It was also confirmed that the Rangers would be working with communities to undertake maintenance/ aftercare tasks to maximise the success of the project.

It was **resolved unanimously** that the proposed tree planting scheme as set out in the report be agreed.



8. External Fundraising Report

This report provided Members with an overview of fundraising activity against the Authority's Fundraising Strategy 2018-2021, and also set out the draft Strategy 2021-2024 for Members' approval.

The Strategy recommended that the main focus for fundraising going forward should continue to be statutory (exchequer) grant funding schemes, however the maintenance of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust (PCNPT) and of the existing Sponsor a Gate scheme were also felt to be key components.

Members thanked officers for their hard work in obtaining external funding and were supportive of the strategy going forward. They were encouraged by the success of the Sponsor a Gate scheme and suggested that this could be expanded to other items of coast path furniture, such as bridges or even electric charging points; the subtle nature of the plaques was commended.

A question was asked regarding the ongoing suitability of the ThankQ database and the importance in general of the management of relationships with donors, particularly legacy donors. The Fundraising Manager replied that licencing of the database was currently an annual renewal and assessment of whether it remained fit for purpose was ongoing. Building and maintaining relationships with donors was a priority for the PCNPT and use of the ThankQ database was key to that as it provided the ability to record a contact's preferences with regard to communication.

Other questions related to the wider funding picture, and the Chief Executive advised that an assessment of the contribution of the various sources of funding received by the Authority was presented to Members at the annual Budget Workshop which took place each December. A report on the work of the National Parks Partnership with regard to fundraising across the National Park family would be presented to the December meeting of the Authority.

It was **resolved** that the PCNPA Fundraising Strategy for 2021-2024 be approved.

[The meeting was adjourned between 11.25 and 11.35am]

9. Personnel Committee Terms of Reference

Members were reminded that at the meeting of the Authority held in September 2020, a policy aimed at streamlining the development and



delegation of the Authority's Human Resource (HR) policies was approved, and it was also requested that the HR Manager review the Terms of Reference of the Personnel Committee in light of the delegation changes.

Having been considered a number of times by the Personnel Committee, revised Terms of Reference were now presented to the Authority for approval. The renaming of the Committee from Personnel to Human Resources to more accurately reflect the current position of HR within the Authority was highlighted. The officer also apologised for a number of typographical and grammatical errors contained within the document and pointed out that there was an error, in that the "Delegation to Leadership Team" should have read "Delegation to the Chief Executive".

It was **resolved** that the Terms of Reference of the re-named Human Resources Committee be approved subject to the minor amendments outlined at the meeting.

[Councillor R Owens left the meeting during consideration of the following item.]

10. Home Working Policy

It was reported that at the Employee Forum Meeting in March 2021, Staff Representatives had asked Members for their views on the 'future of work in the 21st Century' in light of how workplaces were responding to the Work/Life Balance agenda and learnings from the Government's measures to encourage home working during the continued Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Authority's Human Resources Manager was tasked with consulting staff and managers across the Authority with a view to reviewing and amending the existing Flexible Working Policy, and following wide consultation, an amended Flexible Working Policy had been adopted at the Leadership Team Meeting on 14 September 2021. However, in light of the complexities of Home Working (which was only one of many approaches to flexible working), it was agreed that a standalone Home Working Policy was required.

In line with the Authority's delegation protocols, Members were asked to comment on and ultimately approve the new Home Working policy before this was also adopted in practice.

Some Members felt that the tone of the policy could be more positive, as the experience of working from home over the last 18 months had proved that it was possible for the majority of jobs. The HR Manager explained that the policy tried to strike a balance between the desire of staff to work



from home, and the roles of certain staff, such as those working in the Authority's Centres and Wardens for whom this was not possible. He noted that he had received other comments prior to the meeting, and suggested that he re-word the policy and bring it back to a future meeting of the Authority for adoption.

Members acknowledged the diversity of roles across the Authority and the trust that was needed to allow these to be undertaken effectively, with performance management a fundamental element of the management framework. Staff were praised for adapting to the necessity of working from home due to the Pandemic, however some Members were concerned that, in common with other public Authorities, the service currently being provided was not as good as when staff were office based, as it was not as easy to speak to officers face to face. The Chief Executive responded that he agreed that in providing a public service, officers needed to be accessible, however the experience of the previous 18 months had shown that this was possible irrespective of where staff were located; in some cases the systems put in place to allow remote access had proved more convenient.

It was **resolved** that consideration of the Home Working Policy be deferred to the next meeting of the Authority to allow incorporation of the points made at the meeting and by email prior to it.

11. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report 2022/23

Members were reminded that the remit of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) was to prescribe the salaries and allowances payable to Members by local authorities, including National Park Authorities, in Wales. Its draft Annual Report for 2022/23 had been published, and the main recommendations relevant to this Authority were set out. The changes would be implemented on 1st April 2022.

Members' opinion was sought on whether to submit a response to the IRPW draft Annual Report, and if so, the content of such a response. The Monitoring Officer advised that given that the report sought Members' views on whether to submit a response to the Panel, it was unlikely that anyone would have a personal or prejudicial interest.

At the meeting, the Administration and Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer reported that the recommendation was that the basic salary would increase by £685 and pointed out that although it was



proposed that Senior Salaries be increased in proportion to the basic salary, there was a £1 discrepancy, and this was caused by rounding-up.

It was proposed that the report be accepted and no response made to the Panel, however this was not seconded. Another Member suggested that the Authority respond to thank the Panel for their work and note the importance of encouraging the participation of a wide diversity of people to become involved in public life, recognising that the recommendations would provide support for this through the levels of remuneration and contributions to costs that might be encountered. This proposal was seconded.

It was **resolved** that a response be sent to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales thanking them for their work and recognising the importance of adequate remuneration to allow a wide diversity of people to become involved in public life.

12. 2022/23 Insurance Renewal

Members were reminded that all aspects of the Authority's insurance cover was managed by its brokers Marsh UK, who also acted for the vast majority of Welsh Local Authorities. In arranging insurance for the 2015/16 to 2017/18 financial years, and after many years of trying to harmonise terminal policy dates, the three Welsh Parks had been able to go out to the insurance market and undertake a joint tendering exercise. This exercise had yielded significant savings in the total premiums for the three Parks.

Under more favourable insurance market conditions the three Authorities would now ordinarily be going out on a new tendering exercise for the period 2022/23 to 2024/25. However, because of the poor market sentiments pushing up premiums, the advice from Marsh UK had been to hold over on the existing policies and extend them for a further two years. It was noted that in the past, under adverse market conditions, the Authority had adopted a similar stance of extending policies.

After careful consideration, this arrangement had been agreed by the other two Welsh National Parks and the Authority was now requested to approve this strategy.

Members agreed that this was a sensible approach and were pleased that the three Authorities continued to work in partnership.

It was **resolved** that the extension of the Authority's current insurance arrangement for the financial years 2022/23 & 23/24 be approved.



The Minutes of this meeting were confirmed at the meeting of the National Park Authority on 15 December 2021.

