

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

29 July 2020

Present: Councillor P Harries (Chair)

Councillor Mrs D Clements, Councillor K Doolin, Dr M Havard, Dr R Heath-Davies, Mrs S Hoss, Councillor M James, Mr G Jones, Councillor P Kidney, Councillor PJ Morgan, Councillor R Owens, Dr R Plummer, Councillor M Williams and Councillor S Yelland

[Mrs J James joined the meeting during consideration of report 29/20 Coronavirus Recovery Plan (Minute 7 refers)]

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am – 12.20pm)

1. Apologies

There were apologies for absence from Councillor P Baker, Councillor M Evans and Councillor A Wilcox.

2. Disclosures of Interest

Councillor P Harries and Dr M Havard disclosed a personal interest in respect of Report 36/20 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust, however they remained in the meeting.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings (Annual General and Ordinary Meetings) held on the 3 June 2020 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Annual General and Ordinary meetings held on the 3 June 2020 be confirmed and authenticated.

4. Matters arising

(a) Membership of Committees and External Organisation (Minute 6 – NPA AGM 3 June 2020)

The Chair asked for an update regarding representation on the Skomer Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Group, Castell Henllys Steering Group and Ty Canol Woodland Advisory Group. The Administration and Democratic Services Manager advised that the meeting of the Skomer Marine Conservation Zone Advisory Group, at which the matter of representation was going to be raised, had not yet taken place; the Ty Canol Woodland Advisory Group was an officer group, on which the Authority was represented by the Biodiversity Officer, while the Castell Henllys Steering Group no longer existed. There were therefore no further appointments to be made at this time.



NOTED.

- (b) Personal Development Reviews (Minute 4(b) Ordinary Meeting 3 June 2020)

The Administration and Democratic Services Manager advised that ten Members had now completed Personal Development Reviews.

NOTED.

- (c) Responding to the Climate Change Emergency (Minute 8 Ordinary Meeting 3 June 2020)

Dr M Havard advised Members that she had been asked to speak to the Campaign for National Parks who were undertaking surveys of all National Parks in England and Wales to find out what NPAs were doing in response to the Climate Change Emergency. She added that a report summarising the approach of all National Parks would be produced and this would be circulated to all Members for information. She said that she believed the Authority had been very proactive in producing an Action Plan and she had been proud to share the work that was being carried out.

NOTED.

- (d) Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Youth Committee (Minute 11 Ordinary Meeting 3 June 2020)

The Chair advised that work to amend the Committee's Terms of Reference was still ongoing, however the Committee had asked for one of the Authority's representatives on the Committee to be named as the voting Member.

It was **RESOLVED** that Mrs S Hoss be named as the voting Member on the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Youth Committee.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that he had not attended any functions since the last meeting of the Authority due to the lockdown restrictions. However he reported that he had attended two virtual Welsh Local Government Association Rural Forum meetings and two virtual Partnership Council for Wales Recovery Group meetings on behalf of National Parks Wales. The Chairs and Chief Executives of National Parks Wales had also met virtually with the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government. In addition he had attended virtual meetings of the Youth Committee and also a socially distanced site visit at St Brides Car Park with Councillor Owens to discuss problems being experienced there.



He concluded by thanking both Members and staff for their continued support in the current difficult circumstances and hoped that their families and friends remained safe.

NOTED.

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 Committees held on 29 January 2020, 10 February 2020, 3 June 2020, 10 June 2020 and 1 July 2020;
- (ii) Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee held on 13 May 2020;
- (iii) Sustainable Development Fund Committee held on 20 May 2020; and
- (iv) Operational Review Committee held on 17 June 2020.

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

7. Coronavirus (COVID-19) Recovery Plan

It was reported that in response to the relaxation of current Pandemic restrictions by Welsh Government, the Authority had drafted a Coronavirus (COVID-19) Recovery Plan. The Plan was in two parts: Part A contained key principles and important factors to consider for staff to remain focused on protecting the health and well-being of themselves, customers and the wider community; and Part B which included a number of detailed plans 'by department' across the Authority.

Part A of the Plan was shared with Members to give them an oversight of the guiding principles being adopted for Recovery. It also acted as a framework for detailed plans at an operational level as well as department and task based Risk Assessments.

Staff and Unions had been consulted widely on the Plan and had provided considerable feedback. It was now reported to Members for their consideration.

Members commended the Human Resources (HR) Manager for a clear and comprehensive Plan which provided them with reassurance regarding the approach being taken. They also thanked the Chief Executive for the helpful communication to staff and Members during recent months. It was noted that there was considerable stress and anxiety in the general public regarding the lifting of lockdown measures and one Member wondered whether staff had similar concerns about returning to work, and how this would be managed. The HR Manager replied that line managers had done a fantastic job during a difficult time,



keeping in touch with staff on a weekly basis. The majority of staff had now returned to work but most of those who were office based would continue to work from home once the Llanion offices reopened on 1 September. Occupancy levels would be put in place and guidance issued for those returning to the office; extensive Risk Assessments had also been undertaken to protect health and safety. Managers would continue to speak to staff regularly so that any concerns could be addressed.

NOTED.

8. To Extend the Temporary Changes, in light of the Impact of Covid-19, to the Authority's Scheme of Delegation

Members were reminded that at the meeting of the National Park Authority on 6 May 2020, temporary amendments had been made to the Authority's scheme of delegation in order to enable continuity of the planning service during the COVID-19 period. It was noted that the processing of planning applications had been severely impacted due to the limitations on staff carrying out appropriate neighbour consultations and site visit, however both of these had now recommenced. An extension of the temporary changes was therefore sought until 2nd December 2020 in order to ensure there were manageable numbers of applications for consideration at forthcoming Development Management Committee meetings.

Members asked both officers and the Chair/Deputy Chair of the Development Management Committee for their views on the operation of the changes. Officers were happy with the arrangements and reported that applicants were also satisfied as they received a timely decision. The Chair and Deputy Chair also felt the arrangements had worked well and paid tribute to the work of the Director and Development Management Team and the way they had carried out their duties.

A question was asked regarding responses from Town and Community Councils, many of whom were not meeting, and the Director replied that additional efforts were being made to seek their responses.

It was **RESOLVED** that the temporary amendments to the scheme of delegation be extended until 2 December 2020.

9. National Parks Wales: "Landscapes for Everyone" our approach to Social Inclusion and Child Poverty

It was reported that National Parks Wales endeavoured to connect people with the natural and cultural heritage of National Parks and through proactive engagement to promote social inclusion, tackle social exclusion and reduce the negative impacts of poverty. The position statement and priority actions identified how National Parks Wales would deliver their



core purposes and duty while meeting Welsh Government priorities in respect of this area of work.

It was noted at the meeting that Welsh Government had recently confirmed that the Socio-Economic duty, whereby specified public bodies, when making strategic decisions such as deciding priorities and setting objectives, would have to consider how their decisions might help to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage, would come into force on 31 March 2021, and officers noted that a review of the document would therefore be needed at that time to ascertain how the duty could be carried forward.

Members advised that they had read the document with interest and noted that it had highlighted a number of areas of inequality, particularly in relation to access to affordable housing. They asked whether there would be an action plan or some other means of tackling the issues identified and officers replied that as the document was for the three Welsh Authorities, one action plan would not be practical, but the actions would be delivered by existing plans, such as the Corporate Plan. She added that the document would be published on the Authority's website and would be shared with partner organisations.

Members noted that the problem of affordable housing was made worse by the high proportion of second homes in the county, and asked if there were any planning policy proposals to address this. The Director of Planning and Park Direction replied that Authorities currently had no control over the disposal of the existing housing stock and she was not aware of any proposed changes to this position. Members hoped that Welsh Government would look at this, and other issues which were driving inequality across Wales.

It was **RESOLVED** that 'National Parks Wales: Landscapes for Everyone' be adopted and that a review of the document in the spring of 2021 be approved.

10. Standards Committee – Re-appointment of Independent Member

Members were reminded that the Standards Committee comprised seven Members – three Authority Members and four Independent Members. The term of office of one of the Independent Members – Mrs Victoria Tomlinson would come to an end in September, however the Standards Committees (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006 allowed for the re-appointment of an Independent Member for one further consecutive term of four years without the need to advertise a vacancy.



It was **RESOLVED** that Mrs Victoria Tomlinson be re-appointed as an Independent Member of the Standards Committee for a period of four years until 22 September 2024.

11. Grant Approvals in accordance with Section 76 of the Financial Standards

It was reported that Section 76 of the Financial Standards (2016) required that payment of 'total value Grant and Sponsorships under any one agreement over £10,000' required approval from the National Park Authority. Approval was therefore sought for a payment of up to circa £75,000 to Pembrokeshire County Council as a contribution towards the Pembrokeshire Greenways Partnership. Details of the funding was provided.

Members asked for numbers of those using the coastal bus and Park and Ride services, together with an indication of other third party contributions to the Partnership and the Finance Manager agreed to provide this information to Members.

It was **RESOLVED** that a payment of up to circa £75,000 to Pembrokeshire County Council as a contribution towards the Pembrokeshire Greenways Partnership be approved.

12. Membership of Committees and Outside Bodies.

Members were reminded that at the Annual General Meeting on 3 June 2020, it was reported that consideration of the membership of the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee, Grievance Committee and Appeals Committee would be confirmed once the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Authority and other relevant Committees had been appointed. This had now taken place and suggested compositions of the Committees were set out in the report.

It was also noted that at the Annual General Meeting Councillor M James had been appointed to represent the Authority on the South West Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party, but no substitute Member was appointed.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) Membership of the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee, Grievance Committee and Appeals Committee be confirmed as set out in the report; and
- b) Dr M Havard be appointed substitute Member to represent the Authority on the South West Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party



13. Repurpose and Delivery of the Sustainable Development Fund

Members were advised that as a result of the Authority's approval of the Climate Emergency Action Plan in June, which recommended prioritising SDF funds for innovative projects that responded to the climate change emergency, together with a grant of an additional £50,000 from Welsh Government Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places scheme for capital decarbonisation projects, a workshop was held for Members of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Committee to review the Fund. In addition to refocussing on supporting projects that delivered the Authority's response to the climate emergency, consideration was given to improving the efficiency, cost effectiveness, transparency and measurable outcomes of the grant.

Members of the Committee had discussed several options and had recommended a number of changes to delivering the funding:

- a) Change from a generic 'open call' which is the current delivery mechanism for funding, to a more direct and targeted approach to the funding, with applicants applying for one of three specific carbon reduction projects while retaining a fourth option of being able to bid for a more individual project;
- b) Simplified process of applying and administering the fund;
- c) Focus SDF funding on supporting 'not for profit organisations';
- d) Match Funding Requirement;
- e) Discontinue the Little Green Grant at the end of the current financial year;
- f) Reduction in Committee Members from 12 Members (6 NPA and 6 Advisory) to 6 NPA Members plus 1 or 2 Advisory Members.

Members welcomed the recommendations which they agreed would allow the best use to be made of available funds and highlighted the importance of carbon reduction measures. A question was asked regarding the deliverability of the fund, given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, however officers replied that they believed the changes proposed would allow the money to be spend in the current financial year.

It was **RESOLVED** that the changes to the Sustainable Development Fund recommended by the Sustainable Development Fund Committee and outlined in the report be endorsed with immediate effect.

14. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust – Our First Year 2019-2020

It was reported that as part of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust and the National Park Authority, the Trust had committed to sharing with the Authority an update of its progress on an annual basis. The Trust launched to the public in April 2019 and appended to the report was its Annual Impact Report 2019-20 which outlined details of the projects that the Trust had



supported with the funds it had raised to date. The projects were put forward by officers of the National Park and the Trust had agreed a broad portfolio of funding opportunities which could be aligned with potential funders.

The Chair of Trustees, Elsa Davies was present at the meeting and she thanked Members of the Authority and the Chief Executive for taking the decision to set up the Trust. She hoped that its impact would grow in future years in order to support worthwhile projects within the National Park.

Thanking the officer for her presentation, Members felt that Trustees had had a successful first year and congratulated them on their success. They believed that the Impact Report was well presented and would prove useful in approaching new funders going forward.

NOTED.

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The Minutes of this meeting were confirmed at the meeting of the National Park Authority on 30 September 2020 subject to the following amendments:

In respect of Minute 5 – Chair’s Announcements, the Chair had noted that he had attended a number of meetings on behalf of National Parks Wales, of which he was also Chair. Members wished their congratulations to him on that appointment to be recorded. Also in respect of Minute 14, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust, the final paragraph congratulated Trustees on their success, however it was requested that the work of officers be also reflected and it was therefore suggested that the word “Trustees”, be replaced with “the Trust”.

