

# National Park Authority

01 May 2024

## **Present (In Person)**

Councillor D Clements (Chair)

Councillor S Alderman, Dr M Havard, Dr R Heath-Davies, Mr GA Jones, Councillor R Jordan, Dr R Plummer, Councillor V Thomas, Councillor M Wiggins and Councillor A Wilcox.

## **Present (Remotely)**

Councillor SL Hancock MBE, Mrs S Hoss, Councillor M James and Councillor S Skyrme-Blackhall.

## **Also in attendance:**

Kate Attrill (Development Management Manager), Elsa Davies (Chair of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust), Catrin Evans (Head of Finance), Charles Felgate (Solicitor), Emma Gladstone (Strategic Policy Manager), Georgia Jones (Democratic Services Officer), Tegryn Jones (Chief Executive), Michael Kent (Monitoring Officer), Caroline Llewellyn (Democratic Services Manager), Katie Macro (External Funding Manager / Director of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust), Jessica Morgan (Head of Decarbonisation), Sara Morris (Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement) and James Parkin (Director of Nature Recovery and Tourism).

[Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock and Remotely 10.00am – 11.45; 11.55am - 12:45pm]

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs J James, Councillor P Morgan, Councillor B Price and Councillor C Williams BEM.

### **2. Disclosures of Interest**

Dr M Havard and Councillor M Wiggins both declared interests in item 8, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust Review. Councillor V Thomas declared an interest in Report 14/24, Article 4 Direction Camping 28-day consultation. Councillor M James declared an interest in report 19/24, Toilet Facilities Update. Dr R Plummer made a general declaration as a Board Member of Natural Resources Wales and a Trustee of Plantlife and Director of Plantlife Biodiversity Enhancements LTD however they each remained in the meeting and played a full part in the discussions.

### **3. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20 March 2024 were presented for confirmation and signature.



On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Dr R Heath-Davies, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 20 March 2024 be confirmed and signed.

#### **4. Action Log and Matters Arising**

In response to a query raised by the Chair, the Democratic Services Manager confirmed that Councillor A Wilcox had expressed an interest and was now a member of the Income Generation Working Group.

The Chair requested an update on the Pay & Grading Review and the Chief Executive confirmed that moderation panels were taking place and that all matters were on schedule to adhere with the confirmed deadline.

In relation to action point 948, 'to create an action plan to feature in the Welsh Language Strategy', a Member highlighted that this had been circulated by the Democratic Services Manager and positive feedback was provided regarding the action points included.

The Democratic Services Manager took the opportunity to remind Members that updates had been requested from those who represented the Authority on various external bodies and some updates were still outstanding.

The Chair confirmed that she had distributed information regarding Visit Pembrokeshire to Mr G A Jones as requested therefore the related action could be closed.

**Noted.**

#### **5. Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reported that the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park had recently been voted second favourite National Park by Which Magazine and she congratulated Officers, Volunteers, and fellow Members for the achievement.

The Chair also offered congratulations to the Roots to Recovery team who were recently presented with an award of merit for their work at the Pembroke Town Council Civil Awards.

It was also reported that the Chair and Chief Executive had met with Janet Finch Saunders, Conservative Member for Aberconwy and Shadow Minister for climate change to discuss matters such as second homes, affordable housing and green energy.

**Noted.**



## 6. Reports of meetings of various Authority Committees

The following reports of meetings of several of the Authority's Committees were presented to Members for consideration/information:

- (i) Development Management Committee held on 13/03/2024;
- (ii) Operational Review Committee held on 06/03/2024;

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

## 7. The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust Annual Review

The Chair of the Pembrokeshire Coast Charitable Trust and the External Funding Manager / Director of the Trust presented an annual update on the work of the Trust. The presentation included end of year finances for 2023/24, details of secured funding for the next financial year, the Fundraising Delivery plan for 2024/25 and a fundraising update in relation to the Authority.

In response to a Members' query, the Director confirmed that the team focused on applying for grants that were specifically for projects as grants for unrestricted funding were limited. It was added that the Trust currently had £17k of unrestricted funding which was considered a suitable amount as any more would negatively impact the team's ability to apply for grants.

It was reported that the financial target for the following year was £125k and a Member asked how the target had been determined. The Director responded that the target had been agreed in collaboration with the Trust's Treasurer by considering elements such as historic targets. The Director acknowledged that £125k could be considered ambitious however due to the level of funding already secured by the team, the target was believed to be achievable.

It was reported that the Trust had received a £4k legacy donation and a Member asked whether the team had established a target for legacy donations. The Director responded that although a specific target had not been set, a legacy event had been coordinated for the Autumn where it was anticipated that further progress would be made in securing more legacy donations. The Director highlighted that work was required on the Trust's website to further promote the option to leave a legacy donation.

It was reported that in 2023/24, the total income for the Trust was just over £79k. A Member highlighted that the Trust received £60k of unallocated funds from the Authority on an annual basis and the question was raised as to whether this was a good return on investment for the Authority. The Chair of the Trust responded that a Trustee away day had been organised to discuss matters such as the Trust's finances and what could be done to improve the situation. The Chief Executive added that



he considered the Trust to be one of many income generating sources for the Authority however it was recognised that the return on investment for the Trust was lower than other sources of income. He explained that the Fundraising team did however work effectively in their bid to also raise funds directly for the Authority which had equated to approximately £500k over the last 12 months. It was agreed that the Trust was in its infancy having been established in 2018 and the fundraising landscape was difficult due to a number of factors such as the cost-of-living crisis. It was added that despite this, a significant change was required to ensure it provided a greater contribution to the work of the Authority.

**Noted.**

#### **8. Article 4 Direction Camping 28-day Consultation**

The Chair welcomed the Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement who presented a report that sought approval to consult on a proposed Article 4 Direction that would remove some permitted development rights for camping and caravanning. It was explained that this would provide a planning framework that would allow the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) to promote regenerative tourism in a sustainable manner.

The report provided background information and detailed where the operation of permitted development rights in relation to some camping and caravan sites was undermining the regenerative tourism strategy. The report outlined that an exemption currently allowed the use of land for temporary 'pop-up' tented campsites for up to 28 days a year without the need for planning permission. It was reported that there was potential under the current legislation for significant individual and cumulative landscape impacts as well as other associated impacts on infrastructure and the environment such as unregulated foul water discharges adversely affecting watercourses. The current situation was also reported to place a significant burden on the Authority's enforcement officers who were asked to assess whether camping and caravan sites were in breach of planning.

The paper set out the options considered by Officers and a preferred option which would provide an improved framework to help manage the current impacts of 28- day temporary campsites by removing the permitted development right and improve collaboration with Exemption Organisations to ensure compliance through the introduction of a voluntary code of conduct.

In response to a Member's query, the Director confirmed that it would be difficult to predict the number of applications that would be submitted as a result of the proposed change. It was added that despite this, comparable Authorities that had previously implemented the change had experienced



a low level of permitted development applications and a high level of movement of sites to Exempted Organisations. It was therefore predicted that the results would be similar for PCNPA. The Director explained that the movement of sites to Exempted Organisations could be positive as the Authority would then be able to collaborate with this group to improve the overall standards.

On the note of collaboration, the Director reported that meetings had been conducted with the two other Welsh National Parks and other Authorities that had implemented a similar Article 4 in order to share experiences and updates. It was added that Natural Resources Wales had been notified of the proposed change and were positive regarding the Authority's approach. The Director confirmed that a workshop had been scheduled for both town and community councils to discuss the proposal.

With regards to financial considerations, a Member asked whether the introduction of the proposed Article 4 would be cost neutral. It was reported that the Authority had sufficient budget to carry out the consultation however there would be a resource implication due to permitted development applications being non-chargeable. The Director explained that despite this, enforcement investigations would be simplified, and it was predicted that there would therefore be a net reduction in Officer time, making the change cost neutral overall.

A Member expressed concern regarding the potential negative perception of the Authority in light of the proposal. It was agreed that effective communications would be crucial in managing the public's perception.

A Member requested reassurance that should the Article 4 be introduced, that sufficient notice be provided to the public to submit applications. In response, the Director highlighted the timeframe featured in the report and confirmed that there would be ample opportunity for all sites to submit their applications. It was reported that the team would be working to an 8-week timescale for each application to be processed.

On the topic of timescales, a Member queried whether there would be means to fast-track certain applications that were simple. The Director responded that the team were looking into developing application categories in order to fast-track eligible applications. It was acknowledged however that the need for consultee responses would likely impact the processing time of applications.

A Member queried whether the Authority should complete a Regulatory Impact Assessment for the proposed Article 4, and this was noted to be investigated by the Director.



On the proposal of Dr M Havard, seconded by Councillor R Jordan, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) A public consultation take place in respect of:
  - a) The potential introduction of an Article 4 (1) Direction removing permitted development rights for 28-day rule sites as set out in the Background Paper Appendix A.
  - b) The potential introduction of a Code of Conduct / Working Protocol for Exempted Organisations as set out in the Background Paper Appendix A.
- 2) The Stage 1 Integrated Impact Assessment in Appendix B Part 1 and Part 2 and a FAQs document, questionnaire and draft guidance note on how applications for a 28-day site would be assessed through the planning system be published simultaneously for information.

## **9. Destination Management Plan (DMP)**

The Chair welcomed the Director of Nature and Tourism who presented a report that sought Members approval for the refreshed Pembrokeshire Destination Management Plan (Tourism Strategy) 2024-2028.

It was reported that Visit Pembrokeshire had been formed in 2020 by bringing together resources formerly delivered by 4 different organisations: Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC), Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA), Pembrokeshire Tourism and PLANED. One of its core functions is to lead and oversee the delivery of the Tourism Strategy which is referred to as the Destination Management Plan.

The report outlined that the DMP was a strategic document, which provided a focus for activity and investment in Tourism within Pembrokeshire. While the production of the strategy, and aspects of its delivery were led by Visit Pembrokeshire, it was a partnership strategy, which could not be fully delivered without PCC, PCNPA and other parties in the private and third sectors such as PLANED and the tourism business community. The report provided further background information, details of the related consultation and a draft of the updated DMP.

A Member expressed concern due to the lack of measures in the report and requested that these be featured in order to ensure that progress and success could be tracked. Additionally, it was suggested that priorities be identified as the DMP was considered a good opportunity to positively influence regenerative tourism. The Member also suggested that an action log be featured in the plan with commitments agreed by all parties.



The Chief Executive agreed that quantitative measures would be required as part of the DMP in order to monitor success. The Director responded that a dedicated DMP steering group had been established to consider strategic priorities and other elements of the plan.

It was noted that as part of the DMP, there was an action to integrate a sustainable public transport system to provide reliable alternatives to the car to support visitors, communities and workforces. A discussion ensued regarding the importance of sustainable travel to Pembrokeshire and the challenges in achieving this. It was explained that the Authority had conducted an independent piece of work that looked at ways in which sustainable transport could be improved in the area to then feed into a much wider approach. It was added that the Authority had responded to the Regional Transport Plan to identify priorities for Pembrokeshire.

The Director highlighted that should the strategy be approved, it would then be presented to the Tourism Summit in May which would provide the opportunity for the collective aspirations to be launched and for pledges to be agreed regarding how all parties would contribute.

The Chair requested confirmation as to how much Officer time would be dedicated to the DMP should it be approved. The Director responded that discussions surrounding the DMP already formed part of the team's work as they liaised with partner organisations on a frequent basis. It was added that the capacity of the Regenerative Tourism team had recently increased however overall, the amount of Officer time that would be needed for the DMP would be minimal.

On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Dr R Heath-Davies, it was **RESOLVED** that the Pembrokeshire Destination Management Plan (Tourism Strategy) 2024-2028 be approved with the addition of quantitative measures as discussed.

*[The meeting was adjourned from 11:45am to 11:55am]*

## **10. Policies – Information and Data Protection & ICT User Policy**

The Chair welcomed the Head of Decarbonisation who presented a report that sought formal approval for the Authority's updated Information & Data Security Policy and Information & Communication Technologies User Policy. It was reported that the policies had been approved by the Authority's Management Team and had undergone a consultation process with the National Park Staff and Members.

A Member suggested that a short training video be issued to staff who fail to identify phishing emails in order to raise awareness and reduce future breaches.



On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Dr R Heath-Davies, it was **RESOLVED** that the Information & Data Security Policy and Information & Communication Technologies User Policy be approved.

## 11. Terms of Reference (TOR)

The Chair welcomed the Democratic Services Manager who presented a report that sought Members agreement for the amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Authority and its Committees, including the merger of the Human Resources and Member Support & Development Committees.

It was reported that recent amendments to the Authority's performance reporting mechanisms had triggered a need to review the TOR of the Authority's Audit and Operational Review Committees. Alongside this, there had been a request to clarify the responsibilities of the Human Resources and Audit Committees in respect of Health & Safety. It was noted that whilst amendments had been made to the TOR of several of the Authority's Committees in recent years, it had been some time since they had been reviewed as a whole.

The Officer confirmed that some comments had been received from Members prior to the meeting and these would be taken into consideration.

In response to a Member's query, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Chair of the merged committee would be established at the next Annual General Meeting.

In relation to the Audit Committee, a Member noted that an additional action point had been added to monitor the Authority's performance in relation to income generation. The Member requested confirmation as to the committee's role with this matter, whether it be to monitor or drive income generation. The Chief Executive responded that the Audit Committee was responsible for overseeing financial matters and that income generation and efficiencies would be included as part of normal quarterly financial reporting and could be referenced under the first bullet point of section 2.

Under the heading of 'Risk and Assurance', it was noted that Health & Safety was featured twice for the Audit Committee therefore it was requested that the duplication be removed. This was noted by the Officer.

On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Councillor S Alderman, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- i) The merge of the Human Resources and Member Support and Development Committees be agreed,





- ii) The revised Terms of Reference be approved subject to the above amendments.

## **12. Annual Governance Statement (AGS)**

The Chair welcomed the Head of Finance & Fundraising who presented the AGS for 2023/24. The Statement provided an overview of the Authority's governance arrangements including a consideration of where governance processes and issues needed improving. It was explained that the AGS provided transparency and gave assurance that the Authority was committed to continuously improving the way in which it functioned. Following feedback from the Members, a new style format had been produced with a draft featured in the report.

The Officer highlighted that a number of images had been included in the updated AGS to serve as a reminder to readers of the vision of the Authority and the importance of protecting its special qualities.

Members made a number of suggestions regarding the content of the Statement, such as inclusion of a Committee and senior management hierarchy; a statement regarding the 'three lines of defence' as part of the 'Assurance' section; inclusion of the Development Management Committee as part of the 'Ensuring openness' section; inclusion of key stakeholder details as part of the 'Stakeholder & Community Engagement' section. Finally, it was suggested that the work of the Performance & Compliance Officer and details of specialists used by the Authority be recorded in the section related to 'Determining & Planning Interventions'.

It was reported that the final version of the AGS would be presented to the Authority later in the year as an appendix to the accounts.

**Noted.**

## **13. Toilet Facilities Update**

The Chair welcomed the Director of Placemaking, Decarbonisation and Engagement who presented a report that provided an update on the progress made through working with Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) on toilet facilities. It was reported that the work followed on from a previous agreement by the Authority to make a voluntary contribution to support the provision of public toilets in the National Park area over a 2-year period commencing April 2024. The report provided background information, an update on progress and details of the next steps.

The report referenced two specific projects, at Traeth Mawr/Newport Sands which included using capital grant funding to provide new toilets and a changing spaces facility and also the commissioning of a Coastal Car Park Study to understand how pay and display car parks could



provide accessible gateways to the National Park, including the potential delivery of improved toilet facilities. It was added that the commissioning of the study had been proactive to ensure the Authority had the data for when suitable funding grants were available.

A Member queried as to why the study did not also include the Authority's non-chargeable car parks. The Director responded that due to the limited funding available for the study, pay and display car parks had been prioritised however further work would be undertaken on the non-chargeable car parks in the future. It was confirmed that the feasibility study would be concluded in October 2024 and would look at ways in which the Authority could encourage biodiversity, income generation and inclusion and access at these sites.

A discussion ensued regarding the income generation opportunities of the car parks and Members agreed that a different and more innovative approach was required to ensure the long-term prospects of facilities such as toilets which were considered to be fundamental to the community and visitors. Members reiterated the need for urgency in finding a solution with regards to the public toilets.

Members queried whether it would be feasible for the public toilets to be chargeable. In response, the Officer explained that following discussions with PCC, it was agreed that due to the poor state of a number of the toilet buildings, it would not be appropriate to charge for the use of these facilities at this stage. Despite this, the Officer advised that the study would explore all income generating opportunities including concessions. A Member suggested that the Officers also engage with the private sector to draw on their experiences with private and profitable car parks.

The Director reported that the joint working with PCC had been positive and constructive with a great deal of engagement from their Officers.

**Noted.**

