Report of Head of Decarbonisation

Subject: Information Technology and Digital Transformation Strategy 2024 – 2027

Purpose of Report
To ask Members to consider the Strategy 2024 - 2027 which has been written in accordance with an internal audit recommendations and ICT disaster recovery plan.

Introduction/Background

An effective information communication technology strategy is required to help the National Park to improve business operations.

The strategy covers the next 3 years (2024-2027) and provides a plan that outlines the vision, priorities and goals over that period.

In developing the strategy, we have considered previous and current IT audits, the recent work on the National Park business continuity plan, ICT Disaster recovery plan and Microsoft 365 transition. As well as working with the IT team to identify areas of concern, improvement and projected challenges and risks.

The strategy has been written with the IT team leader, IT team and with input from the Management Team July 2024.

Recommendation
Members are asked to approve the strategy.

Author: Jessica Morgan Head of Decarbonisation

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

Information Technology and Digital Transformation Strategy 2024 – 2027

May 2024

Executive Summary

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority's IT Department supports the organisation's business operations, promotes sustainable practices and ensures robust cybersecurity protection measures. This three-year IT strategy aims to utilise digital technology to meet the goals of both the IT department and the Authority, within resource constraints, providing a valuable and consistent service.

In today's digital age, the effective use of IT is crucial for organisational success. For public sector organisations like ours, strategic IT management is vital for delivering services efficiently and securely. This strategy addresses the challenges and risks that we face, providing a clear action plan for the next 3 years.

Our IT team, comprising three full-time staff members, provides critical services to Authority staff and Members across multiple sites and services. Our focus is on using technology responsibly to support the smooth operation of the Authority, regardless of staff or service location. We wish to continue identifying and implementing new ways of working, particularly making greater use of Microsoft 365 applications, minimising costs where possible, and reducing our carbon footprint. We aim to simplify processes and enhance skills and capabilities within the IT team and across the whole Authority.

Success is dependent on the Authority's ability to adapt to and adopt digital services. Our mission is to enable innovation, improve productivity, and achieve resource efficiencies.

Background

Recent years have seen a significant shift in how we operate, interact with stakeholders, and deliver services, driven largely by technological advancements. The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the shift to remote and home working, hybrid meetings and video conferencing, highlighting the need for a comprehensive IT strategy.

The primary challenge is the escalating complexity of IT systems and infrastructure. As technology advances, so does the intricacy and often future costs of our IT systems. At the same time, pressures within the Public Sector on both finances and staffing are unlikely to change in the short to medium term. Without a clear strategy, this complexity can lead to inefficiencies, redundancies, and vulnerabilities that impede our ability to deliver services effectively and securely.

Moreover, the evolving threat landscape poses significant risks. With the proliferation of cyber threats, safeguarding our digital assets and sensitive information is crucial. An ad-hoc approach to IT management leaves us vulnerable to security breaches, regulatory non-compliance, and financial liabilities.

Vision

To harness the power of digital transformation, enabling the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority to deliver services, enhance operational efficiency, and promote sustainability while ensuring robust cybersecurity.

Strategic Priorities 2024 - 2027

The priorities will support the Authority's operations. They include upgrading infrastructure, enhancing digital skills, transforming data / record management, and improving IT development requests. These efforts aim to foster innovation and productivity while minimising costs and reducing our carbon footprint.

The following 4 strategic priorities will be our focus for this period.

1. IT Infrastructure and Systems

Review and Upgrade Hardware: Focus on network switches, firewalls, and UPS batteries.

365 Migration: Train staff to maximize the use of Microsoft 365.

Agile hotdesking: Develop a flexible working environment with adequate power and connectivity.

Phone Management: Adapt to the analogue switch-off.

System Review: Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of current systems versus hybrid options.

Maintain Functional IT Systems: Ensure all software, equipment, and licenses are up to date and fully functional. Prepare for future IT needs, including cloud versus hybrid reviews.

Resilience and Continuity: Ensure IT systems are robust and capable of supporting ongoing operations during disruptions.

Robust Cybersecurity: Develop and implement a comprehensive cybersecurity plan, including training on cybersecurity and data protection.

2. Digital Skills

In-House Training: Provide ongoing training for staff to maximise the use of Microsoft 365.

Cybersecurity Training: Develop a comprehensive program for all staff and members.

External Training: Encourage staff to enhance their digital skills through external courses such as Activ8 apprenticeship courses.

Policy Compliance: Ensure understanding and adherence to ICT user policies.

Enhance Skills and Capabilities: Improve digital literacy across the Authority to reduce cyber risks and improve IT utilisation.

3. Digital and Record Management Transformation

Data Migration: Move data from F drive to OneDrive, Teams, and SharePoint.

Support Agile Working: Enable access to digital services from any location and on any device.

Data Management: Treat data as a valuable asset, ensuring compliance with data protection regulations.

4. Improving IT Resource Requests

New Business Case System: Develop procedures for requesting new systems, apps, and external data sharing.

Optimised Park Operations: Streamline processes to deploy staff and volunteer resources on higher-value activities, contributing to the Authority's 2030 net zero carbon goals.

Clarify and streamline procedure for new starters and leavers.

Resources

Annual Budget:

The IT team has an annual budget of £270,000 which include staffing, hardware, software, licences and phones.

<u>Staffing:</u>

The IT team consists of three full-time members with support from the Head of Decarbonisation.

Team Leader: Responsible for procurement, software licensing, telecoms, training, 365 migration, security, and cloud systems.

Technical Officer: Responds to IT helpdesk tickets, first-line support, mobile devices, phone system, and support for virtual meetings.

Network Officer: Manages network infrastructure, servers, network assets and backups.

The Head of Decarbonisation provides strategic direction, business continuity, disaster recovery, policy governance, budget forecasting, and procurement.

<u>Current Systems and Services:</u>

The IT infrastructure includes on-premises servers, a hybrid 365 configuration, and server room. Oriel y Parc serves as our designated disaster recovery site. Internet is provided by BT's PSBA (Public Sector Broadband Arrangements).

Conclusion

This IT strategy provides a plan to use digital technology to improve efficiency, promote sustainability, and ensure strong cybersecurity. This strategy is designed to meet our goals within budget limits, delivering value.

This strategy addresses the challenges we face, such as the complexity of IT systems and increasing cyber threats, ensuring we stay agile and resilient.

Adapting to and adopting digital services is essential for our success. By following this strategy, we will support innovation, improve productivity, and achieve resource efficiencies, all while protecting our digital assets.

Our IT team is committed to supporting the Authority's operations by upgrading infrastructure, enhancing digital skills, transforming data management, and improving IT development requests. These efforts aim to foster innovation and productivity while minimising costs and reducing our carbon footprint.

In summary, this IT strategy will guide us in overcoming future technological challenges, ensuring we continue to deliver high-quality services securely and efficiently. Through responsible IT management, we will support the Authority's corporate goals.

There is a need for ongoing dialogue between the technology function and the rest of the organisation to understand business needs and align them with the rapid pace of technological transformation.

Action Plan 2024 - 2027

Objective: IT Infrastructure and Systems			
Action	**Timescale**	**Owner**	**Annual Report - Progress**
Create a hardware and IT asset replacement plan Future funding forecast – asset renewal	March 2025	Network Officer	
Commission external organisation to review overall IT infrastructure, measuring cloud vs hybrid model, considering current resources (staffing and budget).	March 2025	Head of Decarbonisation	
Establish Cybersecurity Framework: Implement security measures and conduct regular assessments, including a 2year pen testing programme and implementation of cyber essentials checklist. With 1st test by end of financial year or when new infrastructure is in place.	March 2025	Team Leader	
Explore the option of moving servers to Azure hosted services.	March 2026	Team Leader	
Phones Mobiles and Landlines – explore one contract for all mobile services. 3CX – appraise the case for moving to hosted version or Teams 365 calling	March 2026	Technical Officer	One Contract for all mobiles (in place April 2024) Very easy to swap over to MS Teams for calls, but this will have a significant increase in costs. (written 04/06/24)
Public phone network switch off at NP buildings.	December 2024	Team Leader	
Objective: Digital Skills			
Provide ongoing training and awareness programs for staff (internal)		Team Leader	

Training needs analysis – question within Wellbeing and Development review.	June 2024	Human Resources	
Support digital champions in each department.	August 2025	Team Leader	
Add tips regularly to Authority Teams channels, encourage others to do so.	September 2024	Team Leader	
Staff training and awareness • IT technical training • Members' training • Explore NCSE tool/ Cyber essentials	September 2024	Team Leader and Technical Officer	
Objective: Digital and Record Management transformation			
Upskill managers and leaders throughout the Authority	December 2025	Head of Decarbonisation and Team Leader	
Offer training and links to support.	July 2024	Whole Team	
Objective: Improving processes for IT resource requests			
Amend project development process and request to fill forms to take account of full cost recovery/ cost implications tied to systems/ licence / IT related cost. Include request for completion of DPIA	January 2025	Head of Decarbonisation and Team Leader	
Update the starter and leaver processes to take account of ICT permissions and assets.	March 2025	Team Leader and Head of People Services	
Explore 6 monthly requests – which will be reviewed and costed in terms of time and money, and prioritised. External support and funding may be required	February 2025	Head of Decarbonisation and Team Leader	

Development of new business case process/ procedure for •Approval of new systems •Approval of new apps	February 2025	Head of Decarbonisation and Team Leader	