

National Park Authority

19 June 2024

Present (In Person)

Councillor D Clements (Chair)

Councillor S Alderman, Councillor M Bowen, Councillor C George, Councillor SL Hancock MBE, Dr R Heath-Davies, Mrs J James, Councillor M James, Mr GA Jones, Dr R Plummer, Councillor S Skyrme-Blackhall, Councillor V Thomas, and Councillor M Wiggins.

Present (Remotely)

Dr M Havard, Mrs S Hoss, and Councillor C Williams BEM.

Also in attendance:

Emma Gladstone (Strategic Policy Manager), Georgia Jones (Democratic Services Officer), Tegryn Jones (Chief Executive), Michael Kent (Monitoring Officer), Caroline Llewellyn (Democratic Services Manager), Michel Regelous (Management Plan and Marine Officer), Tim Buckle (Audit Wales) and Euros Lake (Audit Wales).

[Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock and Remotely
10.00am – 12:00; 12:10pm – 13:20pm]

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Morgan and B Price.

2. Disclosures of Interest

Dr R Plummer made a general declaration as a Board Member of Natural Resources Wales, a Trustee of Plantlife, a Director of Plantlife Biodiversity Enhancements LTD and a Welsh Government Appointed Senior Independent Panel Member for Public Appointments however she remained in the meeting and played a full part in the discussions.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 01 May 2024 were presented for confirmation and signature.

On the proposal of Councillor S Alderman, seconded by Dr R Plummer, it was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 01 May 2024 be confirmed and signed.



4. Action Log and Matters Arising

The Chair requested an update on the Pay and Grading Review and the Chief Executive confirmed that further training of assessors was taking place and the review continued to progress.

A Member suggested that specific deadlines be used, and acronyms be avoided to ensure clarity on the action log.

Noted.

4. Personal Matters

A minute of silence was held in memory of the son of a member of staff who had sadly died in a road accident.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that she had attended the following events:

- The Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership Annual General Meeting where she gave an opening speech
- The Visit Pembrokeshire Tourism Summit
- The Members Study Tour at Castell Henllys and Ty Canol Woods
- A meeting of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee
- The National Park Wales Executive meeting where she had the opportunity to thank Emyr Williams, Chief Executive of Eryri National Park for his contributions before his imminent retirement
- A meeting with Julie James MS to discuss matters such as Planning, the Tourism Levy, the Audit Wales report on Governance and funding for a potential new National Park.
- A meeting with Clare Dowe, Chair of the Friends of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park to discuss matters such as the County Show, the Authority's Management Plan, and volunteering.

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 24/04/2024;
- (ii) Human Resources Committee held on 28/02/2024;
- (iii) Audit & Corporate Services Review Committee held on 28/02/2024;
- (iv) Volunteer Forum held on 18/03/2024;
- (v) Members Support & Development Committee held on 17/04/2024;
- (vi) Youth Committee held on 16/04/2024 and 30/04/2024;
- (vii) Grants Committee held on 08/05/2024;



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

7. Audit Wales Report on Governance

The Chair welcomed Euros Lake and Tim Buckle from Audit Wales who presented the key findings from the Audit Wales report on Governance of the three Welsh National Parks. The report provided both a summary and detailed report that considered the following five key elements: governance model and structures, key functions and responsibilities within these structures, governance culture, infrastructure to support effective governance and arrangements to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of governance.

It was reported that the audit had concluded that the governance model for the National Park Authorities provided a clear framework to discharge key functions, but weaknesses in its implementation presented a risk to good governance. The report included a list of evidence to support the conclusion and provided several recommendations. The report highlighted that an organisational response was required, and Members views were sought on this matter.

In response to the report, Members collectively expressed their disappointment at the key findings and commented that, in their opinions, the report did not acknowledge the differences between the three Parks and in turn, did not reflect the work and culture of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. Members provided several examples of ways in which the findings of the audit did not align with the processes and governance within the Authority.

The report identified weaknesses in the elected Member selection processes and the potential risk to good governance. It was reported that local authorities controlled who was nominated and often, Members were nominated from electoral wards that sat outside of the National Park boundaries and therefore had little connection to local and strategic issues affecting the National Park Authority. In response, a number of Members expressed their disagreement with this finding and explained that as Members of the Authority, it was not their purpose to represent their wards, Members were required to work collaboratively to represent communities of Pembrokeshire as a whole.

In response to several of the points raised by Members, the Officers from Audit Wales confirmed that all findings were based on the evidence presented. It was acknowledged that only some of the findings were within the control of the National Park Authority and organisational responses would also be sought from the Welsh Government and relevant local authorities.



On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Dr R Heath-Davies, it was **resolved** that the views of Members' be incorporated into the organisational response to the Audit with a final draft presented at the next National Park Authority meeting for Members approval prior to submission.

[The meeting was adjourned between 10:00am – 10:10am)

8. **Draft Partnership Plan Consultation**

The Chair welcomed the Management Plan and Marine Officer who presented the Consultation Draft National Park Management Plan ("Partnership Plan") 2025-2029. The report sought Members approval for a variety of consultation draft materials and outlined the consultation details, processes, timelines and next steps.

A discussion ensued regarding the new name of 'Partnership Plan' and a Member expressed concern that the name could lead to confusion regarding accountability. In response, the Officer clarified that the new name had been proposed as it better communicated the nature and purposes of the plan. The Member suggested that the Authority's Corporate Plan and the responsibilities of the Authority's partners be referenced in the 'About this Plan' section to provide clarity. It was also suggested that the Authority's main partners be listed.

The report featured results for a survey based on the Special Qualities of the National Park and it was confirmed that the results had informed several sections within the Plan. The Officer highlighted a selection of quotes from the survey that had been included in the draft Plan. A Member suggested that quotation marks be used, and the design be considered to illustrate that these quotes were taken from the survey.

The report featured a Welsh Language Impact Assessment as an annex and a Member commented that further work was required to cross reference this within the Plan. The Member highlighted examples of ways in which this area of the plan could be strengthened, and this was noted by the Officer.

The Chief Executive commented that the Draft Partnership Plan was still a dynamic document and he felt that prior to going out for consultation it should be amended to better reflect the theme of reducing poverty and inequalities, which was one of the Pembrokeshire Public Services Board Wellbeing Plan's specific project areas.

On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Councillor S Skyrme-Blackhall, it was **resolved** that:



1. Officers be granted delegated authority to incorporate, as necessary, into the draft Partnership Plan and draft Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environment Assessment, and into a final Scoping Report:

- i) Recommendations of the impact assessments (Annexes 4 to 8 of this report).
- ii) Results of the report of consultation on the draft Scoping Report (Annex 10 to this report).
- iii) The additional recommendation from Footprint Ecology regarding rewording policy E1/K (see paragraph 29 of the report).
- iv) Minor changes as needed (e.g. typos, factual corrections).

2. the following documents be agreed for public consultation, subject to comments made by Members at the meeting.

- i) Draft Partnership Plan 2025-2029 (Annex 2 to this report, duly amended as per Recommendation 1)
- ii) List of proposed consultation questions on the draft Partnership Plan (Annex 3 to this report)
- iii) Draft Equality Impact Assessment (Annex 4 to this report)
- iv) Draft Habitats Regulations Assessment (Annex 5 to this report)
- v) Draft Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (Annex 6 to this report, duly amended as per Recommendation 1)
- vi) Draft Welsh Language Impact Assessment (Annex 7 to this report)
- vii) Draft Well-being of Future Generations Assessment (Annex 8 to this report)
- viii) Summary of the Equality, Welsh Language and Well-being of Future Generations impact assessments (Annex 11 to this report).

3. the following be agreed for publication for information purposes as part of the consultation:

- i) Report of consultation on the Special Qualities survey (Annex 2 to this report)
- ii) Final Scoping Report of the Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (Annex 9 to this report, duly amended as per Recommendation 3)
- iii) Report of consultation on the Scoping Report (Annex 10).

9. Standards Committee Annual Report

The Chair welcomed the Monitoring Officer who presented the annual report of the Standards Committee for 2023/24. The report outlined that it was a statutory duty to prepare an annual report to the Authority on how the Standards Committee's functions had been discharged and provided an overview of conduct matters.



The report detailed the Committee's Terms of Reference and covered topics such as training, complaints, trends, local resolution protocol, dispensations, policies, the annual report to the Ombudsman and relevant determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

With regards to training, a Member suggested that a session led by an external trainer be coordinated on the topic of Governance and this was noted by the Democratic Services Manager.

Noted.

10. Annual Report on meeting Welsh Language Standards

The Chair welcomed the Democratic Services Manager who presented the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report for Members' endorsement prior to submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

The Officer confirmed that suggestions had been received from a Member regarding the tone of the Executive Summary and these comments had been noted.

The report outlined the statistics for the website, and it was noted that there had been an unexplainable anomaly in February 2024. A Member suggested that the word 'appear' be removed from the final sentence under section 3.5.1 and a sentence be included to explain that the Authority would investigate the cause of the anomaly.

The report featured a section on the Standards related to Grants and a Member suggested that a statement be featured to confirm that all applications, regardless of whether they were completed in Welsh or English, were treated equally. The suggestion was noted by the Officer.

It was noted that the report featured a section on Public Consultations and a Member queried whether more information could be featured as a result of the significant work the Authority had completed in this area.

The report featured details of Operational Standards and it was suggested that statistics were required to strengthen this section and an action plan be featured in the report to log areas of improvement.

On the proposal of Dr R Heath-Davies, seconded by Mr G A Jones, it was **resolved** that the Annual Report as the Authority's submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner be endorsed, subject to the above amendments.



11. Location of meetings after the Green Room Redevelopment

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report that sought Members views on the location of meetings of the Authority and Development Management Committee while the Green Room was being redeveloped.

It was highlighted that in the event that meetings were online only, Members of the public would be welcome to view and attend meetings using IT equipment at the Authority's headquarters should they not wish to use or have online access at home.

On the proposal of Mrs J James, seconded by Councillor S Hancock, it was **resolved** that meetings of the Authority and Development Management Committee be held online while the Green Room was being redeveloped. However, to ensure that Members could meet face to face over this period, workshops and other meetings that did not require web casting would be held in person, where possible.

12. Electronic Papers

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report that sought Members views on the future provision of paper copies of agendas and papers for the meetings of the Authority and its Committees. It was reported that at present, agendas and papers for Authority meetings were made available to Members both electronically but also in paper copy if requested. The report explained that as a result of advancements in technology and the cost and carbon footprint implications, Members were asked to consider whether the Authority's policy should be amended on this matter to provide electronic papers only.

A number of Members commented that due to a lack of Authority issued IT equipment, some would find it difficult to contribute to meetings without access to physical papers. A Member also commented that the Authority should cater to the needs of each individual Member in order to ensure that they were able to fulfil their duties. Members' health & wellbeing was also raised with reference to the negative impact caused by the over-use of screens.

A number of options of ways to proceed were discussed and on the proposal of Dr R Plumer, seconded by Mrs J James, it was **resolved** that by default, papers would be made available electronically, however, the Authority would respond to any specific requirements from Members to ensure that they were able to fully contribute to meetings.

