

Volunteer Forum Meeting: Minutes

17th July 2024, 10am – 1.30pm, Llanion

Present: Ellie Sherwin (ES), Jon King (JK), Granville Watson (GW), David Fisher (DF), Michele Chung (MC), Rebecca Evans (RE), Sally Boyton (SB), Joy Arkley (JA), Gordon Lewis (part)

Apologies: Karin Howells, Roy Partington, Jan Millward, Madeleine Bland, Helen Clarke

1. Welcome & Apologies

2. Joy Arkley (Head of People Services) – Welcome

Joy introduced herself to forum members and outlined her remit at PCNPA. Forum members also introduced themselves and the volunteer roles they hold within the Park (the majority of volunteer roles across the Park were represented in the room)

Topics covered included:

- The aim to harmonise work practices internally
- The introduction of signposting PCNPA job applicants to volunteering as an avenue for self-development
- The consideration of introducing ‘administration’ volunteer roles within PCNPA HQ and Centres
- Ensuring existing line managers feel secure in their jobs
- Actively encouraging PCNPA staff to use their allocated volunteering day
- Exploring resources and materials to enable an integrated induction/welcome to PCNPA staff/volunteers/members
- Potential for the Forum to be used to identify and decide on which areas to recruit for
- Potential for Youth Rangers to collaborate with other organisations, to broaden their study/career horizons and develop further skills (PAVS used to host a ‘Volunteer Passport’ to enable support across the county)

3. Updates from previous meeting

Update	Action
Organisation chart to outline staff/volunteer structure remains as a request. Joy mentioned there is an updated chart on the internal Parcnet system.	SB to follow up with Gethin (People Services) to locate and adapt if possible.
Footpath monitoring	SB to ask Chris Taylor to confirm a Winter date in the diary.

<p>It was agreed that it would be beneficial for footpath monitors to gain more insight into the management of paths and PCNPA priorities as a whole.</p> <p>Jon repeated that an annual meeting is also important to enable the team to meet each other, discuss the types of issues being reported and to promote standardisation in maps/reporting.</p>	
<p>Volunteers supporting wardens Volunteers remain keen to support PCNPA wardens with tasks where possible to alleviate their teams during busy times. RE has informed the warden team of the proposal several times.</p>	<p>RE to establish whether this will be possible long term. Fed in to the countryside review.</p>
<p>Uniform RE has progressed with sourcing long-sleeved shirts with a collar, which will be offered to new volunteers as an alternative option to the short sleeved polo shirt. Existing volunteers may also be able to have a long sleeved shirt, depending on their role. A sample was sent to Gordon Lewis to trial which the warden team recommended.</p> <p>GL reported that the long sleeved shirt without a collar isn't suitable for volunteers leading day long walks – Castlemartin Range is specifically exposed to heat and horse flies and he feels they need more protection.</p> <p>It was mentioned again that a fleece-lined waterproof provided to one volunteer is too hot for wet summer days.</p> <p>The lengthy timescale in the provision of uniform was highlighted and concern was shared as to why uniform provision for certain volunteer groups is able to be 'upgraded' due to specific projects being allocated more funding. It was proposed that uniform should be core funded to ensure equality for all volunteers.</p>	<p>RE/SB to revisit long sleeved shirt style and report back.</p> <p>RE/SB to explore the provision of this and organise a replacement for the relevant volunteer.</p> <p>RE/JA to discuss how uniform is managed moving forward and develop a clear policy that can be shared with volunteers.</p>
<p>Training Two PCNPA volunteers attended the Emergency First Aid training provided free of charge via PAVS.</p>	
<p>Tree training Several volunteers have shown interest in attending advanced tree training courses (specifically species ID and veteran trees)</p>	<p>SB to arrange potential course dates with Mike Higgins and invite volunteer tree wardens to attend.</p>
<p>Dry venue for wet weather Pathways sessions The provision of a venue to enable Pathways activities and participant support to continue in wet weather hasn't yet been confirmed.</p> <p>The general consensus still stands that the lack of dry venue means that the 'wellbeing' objectives of the Pathways project aren't being met and that the continuous wet weather is clearly demotivating</p>	<p>RE to continue consulting with management team to establish future plans for the project.</p>

participants, particularly those who require additional support. An indoor space is considered a high priority for the project, especially before Winter 2024/25.	
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4. Volunteer updates

Update	Action
<p>North walking group & Independent monitoring Ellie Sherwin reported on her work re. independent monitoring, which is going well and has been slightly limited due to poor weather so far. She shared that the North based Walking for Wellbeing group, developed by herself and Ranger Meg is seeing continued success and they are starting to see walk participants step up to lead a walk independently. Ellie has informed Ben about this and highlighted it to the group as a query to ensure everyone is covered legally.</p>	<p>RE to highlight to Ben Macare re. PCNPA legalities</p>
<p>Youth Rangers Youth Ranger Michele Chung informed the group of work on an updated Youth Manifesto, a living document which now includes additional sections on wellbeing, diversity, etc. They will also be representing PCNPA at Pembrokeshire’s Festival of Inclusion at Foundry House, Pembroke at the end of July. Some of the youth volunteers are also working on content creation to enable updates to be shared on social media. Michele also proposed that we consider inviting youth rangers to join adult volunteering sessions during summer months to enable further learning.</p>	<p>MC was invited to provide a written summary for the August volunteering update. SB to discuss the potential of youths joining adult sessions with Maisie Sherratt (Inclusion & Youth Engagement Officer)</p>
<p>North West Voluntary Wardens David Fisher summarised recent activities completed by the North West voluntary team including balsam pulling, maintaining/clearing steps and a beach clean. Volunteers are enjoying their work and looking forward to drier weather soon.</p>	
<p>Pathways Jon King summarised recent activities completed by Pathways including hedgelaying & planting, fencing, beach cleaning, balsam pulling, bird box making, footbridge repair and more. The group is working really well as a team and group dynamics are continually positive, supporting participants effectively. Jon stressed the negative impact on participants when Pathways sessions don’t run (8 haven’t run since March 24 due to staff training and annual leave) and proposed an alternative plan be considered to enable participants to continue in the absence of Mitch. Group</p>	

<p>majority was in agreement that options should be explored (JA also highlighted the importance of staff wellbeing and encouraging staff to take their allocated leave evenly throughout the year).</p> <p>The idea of Pathways volunteers attending ‘social days’ supported by project Mentors was discussed and considered a viable option, using a sub-committee to plan future ‘leader absent’ sessions. Transport and the additional needs of participants will be an important factor to consider in this discussion.</p> <p>Footpath Monitoring Jon presented a map of Pembrokeshire National Park with pins marking the maintained footpath locations. He proposed that we consider creating a digital map to replicate this, which could also host other areas of work (wildlife/woodland monitoring).</p> <p>Heritage Monitors Dave announced he was acting as the representative for Heritage Monitors and enquired about the best way to communicate with monitors to share updates. Using Better Impact ‘committee’ function was discussed (which acts like a group email facility) as a solution.</p>	<p>SB to explore the option to host alternative Pathways activities with Mitchell Hill/Graham Peake</p> <p>SB to share the idea with PCNPA colleagues for comment.</p> <p>SB to liaise with Tomos Jones and RE to test viability of using BI committees (GDPR to be considered)</p>
<p>Wellbeing Walks Gordon Lewis reported that A&E volunteers had met with the Health & Wellbeing team (Angela Robinson/Ben Macare) at the start of the year – several volunteers still feel unclear about Ben’s role specifics (as it’s not a replacement of Sam Evans’ roles) and were confused that they had been offered support from PCNPA when they understand the volunteer role was to be supporting PCNPA.</p> <p>In the absence of a PCNPA coordinator, the walk leaders have taken responsibility to lead walks on a rota-style basis. GL noted that he is usually present, yet highlighted the need to check with the Health & Wellbeing team as to whether independently led walks are still within PCNPA legalities.</p> <p>GL also raised concern about the 6mth period volunteers were left unattended between the departure of Sam Evans and the recruitment of Ben Macare. Volunteers felt there was a drop in communication and organisation of volunteering activity, meaning many were left feeling abandoned and demotivated. JA explained that recruitment for the new role was more complicated than a straight forward replacement, which had resulted in two roles being offered and the role in North Pembrokeshire required Welsh language skills, which greatly reduced application levels.</p> <p>Activities & Events</p>	<p>RE to highlight all points to Angela Robinson/Ben Macare for their attention.</p>

<p>Gordon noted that activities & events walk leaders are becoming thin on the ground and proposed that additional leaders are recruited to ensure a succession plan.</p> <p>Ideas discussed included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing other walks leaders (perhaps Wellbeing Walkers) to ‘apprentice’ on larger walks to gain experience • Offering backmarkers the opportunity to become leaders • Increasing the amount of ‘warm season’ walks to attract more leaders 	<p>RE to highlight these points with Sarah Parmor.</p>
<p>North Voluntary Wardens</p> <p>Granville Watson provided a detailed update on volunteer activities in the north including coast path clearance, litter picking, cutting back overhanging trees and balsam pulling.</p> <p>The group also said goodbye to Roddy Campbell who has happily retired as a volunteer after 26 years with PCNPA.</p>	

5. PCNPA updates

<p>Countryside Management Review</p> <p>RE shared an overview of the review currently in progress which concludes in September 2024. RE confirmed she has contributed to the review, ensuring volunteering objectives are considered as a key priority.</p> <p>Amongst general discussion, topics raised included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilising wardens as temporary cover for leading Pathways sessions (when Mitchell Hill is absent) • The average age of volunteers is rising (pension age increasing) • More weekend volunteering sessions would benefit the recruitment of younger volunteers, in the hope they will be upskilled earlier and continue to support PCNPA post retirement 	
<p>New PCNPA Member</p> <p>RE informed the group of the election of new PCNPA Member Sam Skyrme-Blackhall who unfortunately couldn’t attend the forum due to another appointment.</p> <p>RE asked forum members to think about some of the bigger issues affecting volunteers that could be raised in the next meeting.</p> <p>The group enquired how new Members are elected for PCNPA.</p>	<p>ALL to consider agenda points for next meet.</p> <p>SB to feedback on how new Members are elected.</p>
<p>Wellbeing Champions</p>	

<p>Joy Arkley introduced the concept of Wellbeing Champions to the group explaining that PCNPA staff reps are being put in place to support the holistic wellbeing of employees (7-strand framework).</p> <p>JA proposed that this support could in theory, be extended to volunteers and encouraged feedback. General consensus was in favour of hearing more and Pathways volunteers highlighted that the Pathways group is a prime example of a team working successfully to support each other's wellbeing, with group leader Mitchell Hill being a particularly positive advocate.</p>	<p>JA to share the presentation mentioned and the Wellbeing Champion job role description when available when this area of support develops.</p>
<p>Volunteer Benefits – PCNPA Walks RE shared an email response from Claire Bates (Head of Regenerative Tourism) outlining the additional pressure on PCNPA for revenue generation and confirming the decision to revert back to the offer of one free public guided walk for volunteers per annum.</p> <p>Forum members stressed that internal communications relating to decisions such as this could be improved to avoid upsetting individual volunteers moving forward.</p> <p>Volunteer Benefits – Training DF asked about future training opportunities available through third party organisations such as PAVS. RE confirmed that the first aid training was hosted by PAVS and future opportunities are always shared in the volunteer update where relevant.</p>	<p>Forum reps to highlight specific volunteer training needs with line managers</p> <p>RE/SB to continue highlighting future training opps.</p>
<p>Wildlife Monitoring Ellie Sherwin enquired whether the activity categories on Better Impact, e.g. Harvest mice related to existing monitoring activities and if there is opportunity to get more involved. RE confirmed these specialist topics have limited activity, yet there may be future tasks available with the Conservation team.</p>	<p>RE to explore opps with Conservation team</p>
<p>UK Parks Volunteering Days Two volunteering days have been confirmed to coincide with a UK Parks campaign to celebrate volunteering nationwide:</p> <p>Fri 20th Sept – Castell Henllys For staff/volunteers/PCNPA members to work together on a variety of tasks such as tidying the barefoot trail, roundhouse daubing, garden tidying, etc.</p> <p>Sat 21st Sept – Freshwater East Public day to encourage new volunteers to experience a variety of tasks covering non-native species, access and wildlife topics (TBC)</p>	<p>RE/SB to circulate further details in the Aug update</p>
<p>Volunteer Celebration SB updated the group on her progress researching activity options for hosting the celebration at Carew Castle, taking into consideration</p>	

<p>organised/guided activity as requested following feedback from 2023. The event will follow a medieval theme with focus on fun activity, socialising and the opportunity to explore the castle grounds.</p> <p>General consensus was that the event would be well received and an invitation sharing some details would be useful to outline what volunteers can expect in advance.</p> <p>The date has been confirmed as Fri 4th Oct.</p>	<p>SB to gain feedback from line managers and continue to organise the event.</p>
<p>Volunteer Handbook & Useful numbers RE confirmed that the new accessible handbook is now available in the Files section on Better Impact. GW enquired if the Useful Numbers information was included in this and if not, could this be available in a useful place. It was thought that this document is already on Better Impact.</p>	<p>SB to confirm if useful numbers doc is available on Better Impact.</p>
<p>Shared space for volunteer documents RE shared that we are exploring ways for PCNPA to host useful volunteer documents securely to enable this space to be used as an information hub. RE and SB have explored options to host as part of the PCNPA website or using Sharepoint with 'guest volunteer' access. The Cairngorms National Park are currently successfully using Sharepoint as a volunteer hub for 65 volunteers. It is to be noted that multi-factor authorisation would be required for volunteers to login, which could potentially pose a barrier to some.</p> <p>Further IT research is to be done to find a solution.</p>	<p>RE/SB to continue research</p>
<p>Better Impact RE provided an overview of the useful ways recording hours on Better Impact has benefited other PCNPA departments re. reporting and extracting stats for funding applications. She thanked everyone for adapting to the new system so well.</p> <p>JK highlighted that the 'mileage travelled' field cannot be accurately inputted when line managers log their hours which is likely to skew results if this was to be included in reports. RE confirmed this data isn't currently being used and that mileage is continuing to be logged via expense claim forms. She shared that work is currently being done across PCNPA to help the decarbonisation team extract the relevant stats re. travel.</p> <p>MC proposed that the Opportunities tab on their dashboard be better populated to outline what each activity involves. SB confirmed that this feature will be utilised more in the long term.</p>	<p>SB to discuss remaining Better Impact queries with Jon King externally</p>

6. AOB

No further items raised.