

Report of the Director of Nature and Tourism

Subject: Request from the RNLI to Undertake Fundraising Activities on National Park Beaches

Purpose of Report

Members are asked to approve RNLI fundraising on six Park Authority managed beaches until Dec 2029.

Introduction/Background

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) is responsible for a substantial length of the coastline throughout Pembrokeshire via a range of freehold and leasehold arrangements. In most cases, PCNPA controls either the beachhead and/or the foreshore area. As a result, most organised beach activities that take place within Pembrokeshire require a licence or other formal permission from the Park Authority.

Over the years the Park Authority has generally not supported commercial and/or charity fund raising activities to take place on PCNPA controlled beaches due to the potential impacts on the National Park's special qualities and people's enjoyment of our local beaches.

However, in April 2008 the Park Authority agreed to make an exception for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) and granted permission for the charity to provide an information and fundraising presence on some beaches in Pembrokeshire for a limited period and only on a trial basis.

At the time, this was a change to PCNPA's longstanding approach but was accepted because of the vital role that the lifeguard service of the RNLI provides and the opportunity to impart practical beach safety information to the general public. The initial trial period was deemed to be a success, and the RNLI has continued to fundraise on a number of beaches throughout Pembrokeshire during the summer months with the expressed permission of PCNPA.

The RNLI has again contacted the Park Authority, via Pembrokeshire County Council, seeking permission to renew their fundraising activities which underpin the safety of key beaches as follows:

- Newgale
- Broadhaven
- Nolton Haven
- Whitesands
- Newport Beach
- Poppit Sands

*Fundraising activities take place between 1st May – 30th September each year.

Comparisons

Whilst fundraising activities take place at a large number of beaches throughout the UK it is felt that uninterrupted access and enjoyment of beaches throughout the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park is one of the county's unique selling points. The quality of the beach experience in Pembrokeshire is enjoyed by just about every visitor to the County and is, therefore, vital to people's well-being and the wider visitor economy. It is therefore important that commercial and/or charitable activities are sensitively managed and do not erode the visitor experience.

However, the RNLI provide an important role in managing beach safety that, if withdrawn, would need to be funded by other local service providers. In addition, the reputation of Pembrokeshire beaches as being both clean and safe is equally vital to the visitor economy and, to this end, the RNLI play an important role that keeps the beach experience in Pembrokeshire 'competitive' when compared with other destinations in the UK.

For the above reasons Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) remain supportive of the RNLI's beach presence and currently authorise the RNLI's fundraising activities on beaches under PCC's management control.

Options

The basic options in responding to the RNLI's request are as follows:

- Remove or reduce consent for use of NPA beaches for RNLI fundraising activities.
- Agree to part of the RNLI's request. However, this might increase the cost of providing lifesaving activities and associated safety messaging locally with a potential impact on PCC's budget.
- Agree to all of the RNLI's request to continue providing a highly regarded and cost-effective lifeguarding service throughout Pembrokeshire.

Financial considerations

There is no charge made by PCNPA in allowing the RNLI to undertake fundraising activities at key beach sites. However, it needs to be recognised that the presence of the RNLI helps to subsidise the lifeguard service in the county which adds to the appeal of Pembrokeshire as a destination whilst reducing the burden on the public purse for providing such services (i.e. it's an arrangement with reciprocal benefits).

Risk considerations

Risks-

- If the NPA refuses permission – we will need to have clear ground for doing so (e.g. what has changed?) and a decision of this nature could impact on PCC's/RNLI's ability fund the lifeguard service on key beaches in Pembrokeshire.
- If the NPA grants permission – we need to be clear that the RNLI will be receiving a commercial benefit of considerable value that we don't presently afford to other local charities.

Human Rights/Equality impact issues

No evidence to suggest possible issues, although the 'right' to a person's quiet enjoyment of the beach could be impinged upon.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

No implications

Welsh Language statement

The RNLI will continue to supply bi-lingual safety information.

Conclusion

The RNLI have requested that the Park Authority grants formal permission for their staff to fundraise on six Park Authority managed beaches (listed previously) for the next 5 years.

Recommendation

Members are recommended to give consent for the RNLI's fundraising activities to continue for a further 5 years (to December 2029) subject to the following conditions:

- **That fundraising activities undertaken by the RNLI are limited to 28 days on any single site.**
- **That all promotional and safety literature provided by the RNLI is bi-lingual.**

Background Documents

- NPA report from Recreation Management Officer outlining initial proposal April 2008
- Report to NPA 2nd April 2008 when authority agreed initial consent.
- Report to NPA 24th June 2009 when authority agreed to extend consent
- [Report to NPA 30th March 2011](#) when authority agree to extend consent
- [Report to NPA 11th December 2013](#) when Authority agreed to extend consent
- [Report to NPA 7th March 2019](#) when Authority agreed to extend consent

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Consultees: Gary Nichols – Leisure Services Manager, PCC

Appendix A – RNLI Face-to-Face Fundraising

Water Safety Messaging:

Staff are trained on the importance and application of safety messaging. At each location we offer essential water safety messages these include swim between the red and yellow flags, what the different types of flags mean, our 'float to live' campaign, how to stay safe on a paddleboard, how to escape a rip-current, and how to identify an offshore wind.

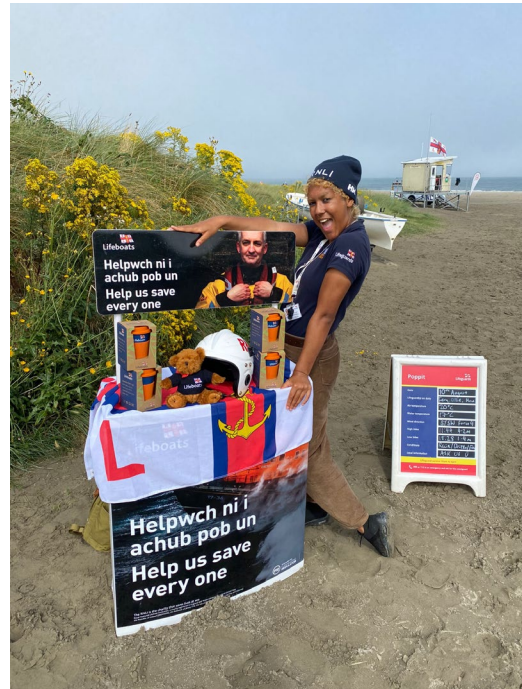
We also deliver **location specific** information:

How?

We work closely with our expert water safety lead for West & the Isle of Man, this ensures we have access to real time data. This allows us to target our messaging in accordance with what are deemed to be the most common risks, at each location.

For example, at Saundersfoot Harbour this is the common use of inflatables in the harbour, and risk of jumping off the sea defence walls.

Furthermore, at the start of each shift staff members are expected to check in with lifeguards and request what water safety information would be best suited according to the location. This will often be dependent on the most common rescue lifeguards conduct, whilst at the location.



Why?

All our staff are passionate about water safety! Not only is it a key part of our role, but our staff more often than not have first-hand experience, whether as a lifeguard or a crew member. Hence, their commitment to this work is personal!

Please see a breakdown below of Water Safety Messages from summer 2024 (delivered at your locations):

- **Whitesands** - Respect the Water Messages: **517** - Youth Education Message: **363**
- **Poppit Sands** Respect the Water Messages: **389** - Youth Education Messages: **259**
- **Broadhaven** - Rest the Water Messages: **286** - Youth Education Messages: **166**



Fundraising:

Our teams **ONLY** fundraise at beach locations within the remits of the lifeguarding season. Our staff are trained to an extremely high level and adhere to strict fundraising policies and are registered and have achieved award-winning status with the Fundraising Regulator.

All funds raised go directly towards lifesaving activities, with less than £0.25 per £1.00 donated directed towards admin costs.

All POD's are bilingual and we are have a number of Welsh speakers on the team.